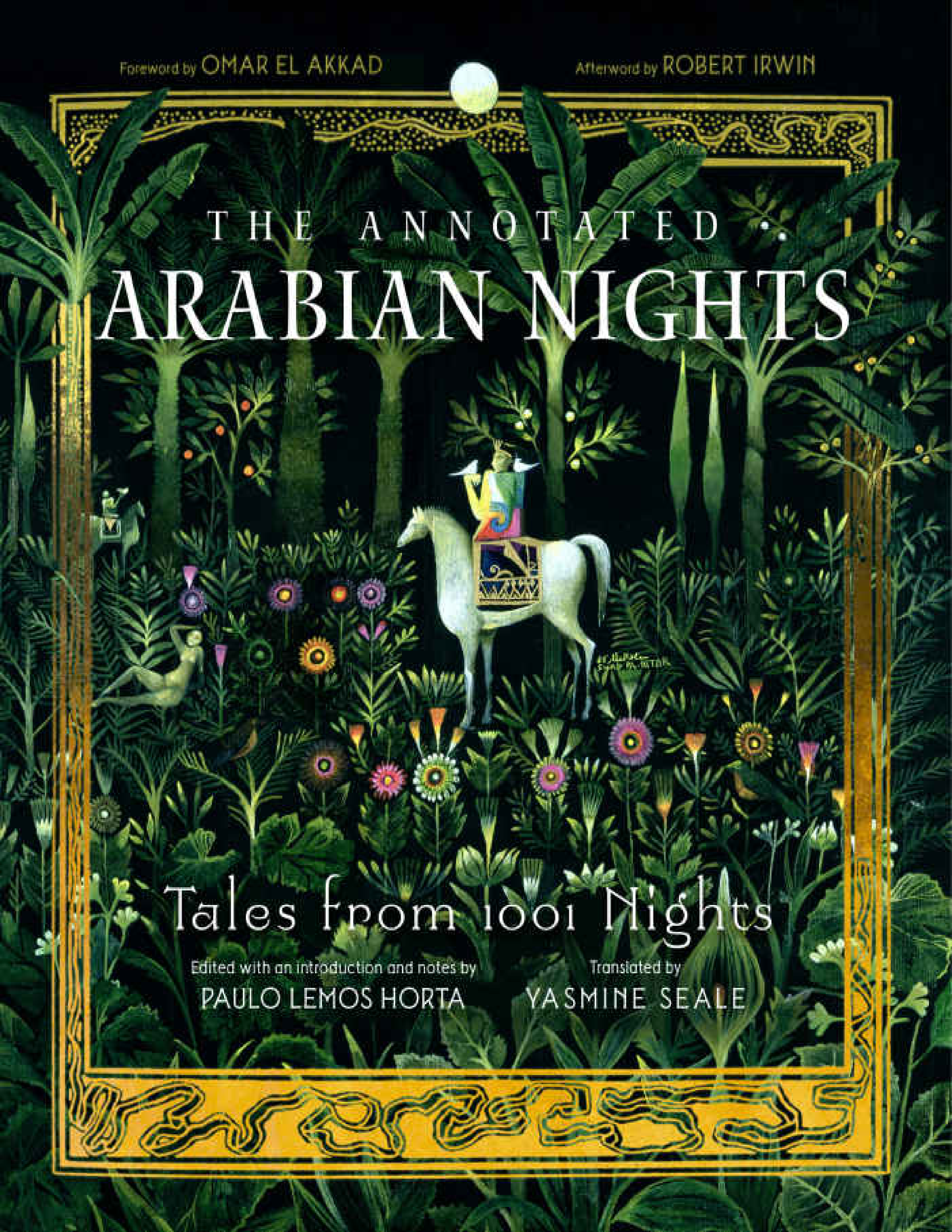
Foreword by OMAR EL AKKAD

Afterword by ROBERT IRWIN



THE ANNOTATED ARABIAN NIGHTS

Tales from 1001 Nights

Edited with an introduction and notes by
PAULO LEMOS HORTA

Translated by
YASMINE SEALE

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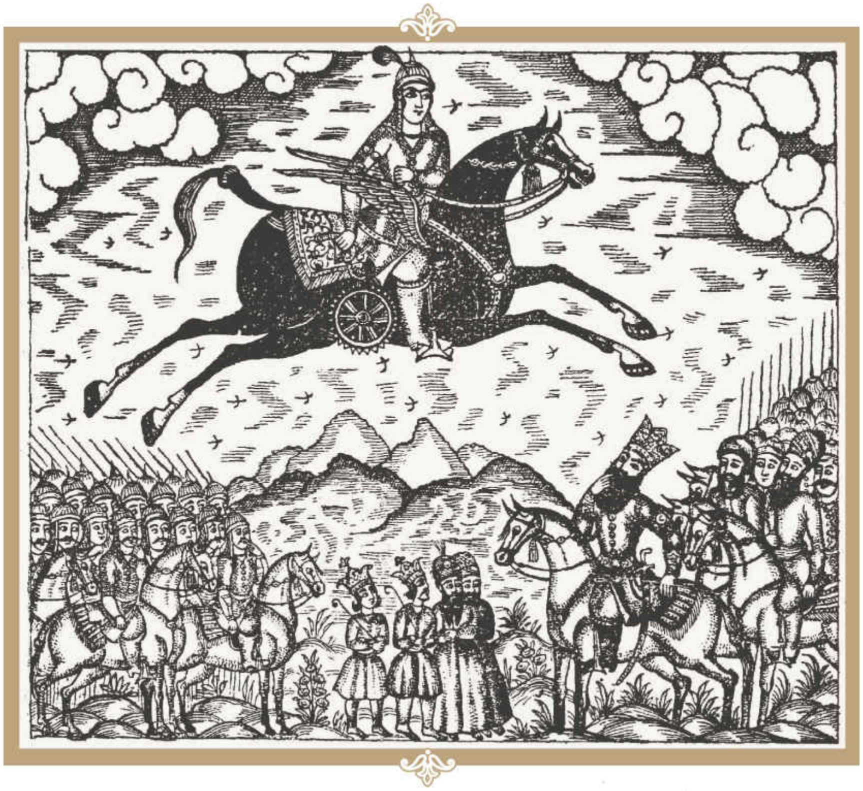

From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of The Thousand and One Nights*, illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

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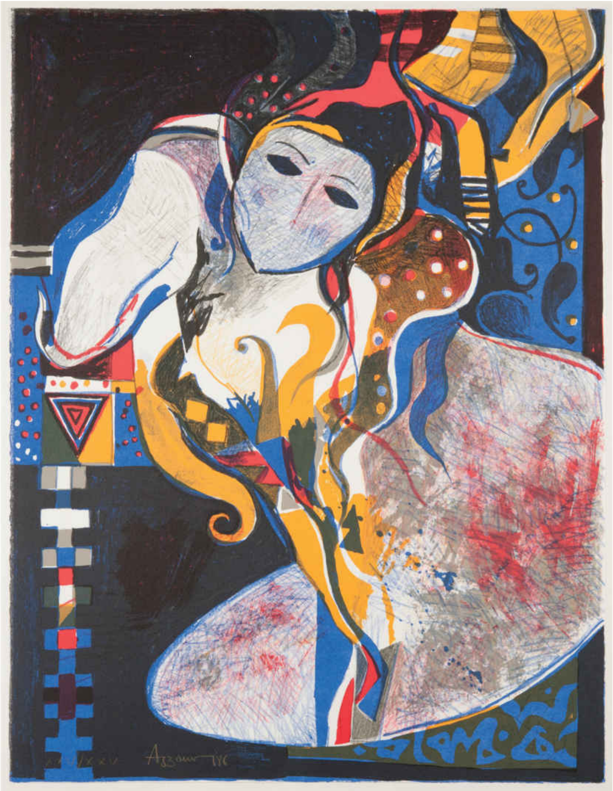
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

RECOMMENDED READING, VIEWING, LISTENING, AND PLAYING

WORKS CITED

A NOTE ON THE TITLE

This story collection has gone by different titles in different times and places. When referring to the Arabic versions that preceded European translation, I use *One Thousand and One Nights*, a title that is closer to the original Arabic title, *Alf Layla wa-Layla*. Because this selection includes tales like “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” added by the French translator from the tales of a Syrian storyteller in 1709, I refer to it by the English title most used for the more inclusive body of tales: *Arabian Nights*. We refer to the characters by the names familiar from popular translations, such as Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sinbad, and from recent scholarly translations, such as Shahrazad and Shahriyar. Arabic words and proper names are transliterated without diacritical marks.



Painting by Dia al-Azzawi, 1986. Artist Dia al-Azzawi, born in Baghdad in 1939, became a central figure in the development of modernist art in Iraq. Based in London since 1976, al-Azzawi continues to be influenced by issues of justice in the Arab world. This painting is one of a series of pieces inspired by the tales of The Thousand and One Nights. *Printed with the permission of the artist.*

FOREWORD

BY OMAR EL AKKAD

WHEN MY FATHER was a boy, he used to sneak into the ancient coffeehouse and listen to the master make poems out of air.

The El Feshawy coffeehouse in Cairo’s Al Hussein neighborhood has been in continuous operation, by the same family, for more than 220 years. Under the light of the copper chandeliers, in the shadow of the great mosque and the sprawling Khan al-Khalili bazaar where my father spent so much of his childhood, it has served dictators and diplomats, poets and kings. Among its most famous regulars was Naguib Mahfouz, an Egyptian legend and the only Arab to have won the Nobel Prize in Literature. It is rumored he wrote parts of his most famous work, *The Cairo Trilogy*, at one of the tables here, sipping on mint tea brewed in a nearby basin of sand.

Every week or so, a constellation of cultural luminaries—painters, singers, writers, and poets—would descend on the coffee shop to engage in what might be called a literary salon of sorts, conversing about the issues of the day before inevitably launching into a battle of improvised verse.

Whenever this happened, my father, who lived down the street, would find his way into the coffee shop. Along with some of the other neighborhood kids, he’d tuck himself beneath one of the nearby tables and listen to the poets slinging verse back and forth. On this went into the early morning, until the rhymes became too profane, at which point the proprietor himself, Hajj El Feshawy, would run over and shoo the kids away with a broom.

My father died too young. It has been more than a decade since our final conversation, a phone call while he was on vacation with my mother in Italy; he'd found a clothing store he liked and wanted to know my shirt size. The following night, he suffered a heart attack in his hotel room. He was a good man and I miss him dearly.

Of all the stories my father told me about his childhood, the one of Mahfouz at El Feshawy most fiercely anchors my memory of him, in large part because of the way he momentarily transformed while telling it, that strange mixture of pride and giddiness that came over him, as though he were in possession of some secret all his own. And in a way, he was: As far as I know, there is no official record of the rhymes Mahfouz and his contemporaries invented on those nights some sixty years ago. The only compendium is in the passed-down memories of those who were there, those who heard them. What mattered to my father, more than anything else, was this ritual of transmission, just as what mattered most during those battles of verse was not some inherent quality of the poetry, but the immediate impact they had on the listeners. Every story is simply bone. The marrow, the life-full thing, is the telling.

When I was asked to write a foreword to this new translation of *One Thousand and One Nights*, I was instantly drawn back to the first time my uncle sat me down on the balcony of my grandmother's apartment in downtown Cairo and told me the story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." I distinctly remember hanging on every word, simply *needing* to know how Ali Baba would get out of this mess. It was only many years later, when I read the text in a translated anthology, that I realized my uncle had gotten about halfway through the "official" story of Ali Baba, likely forgot how the rest of it went, and began freelancing a new narrative, one in which Sindbad and Aladdin made guest appearances and the whole drama culminated in a sword-swinging melée—a completely, wonderfully apocryphal interpretation. My introduction to *One Thousand and One Nights* was a story that belongs now only to me.

Traditionally, it is incumbent on the author of forewords such as these to explain at length to the reader why it is somehow essential that they read the work in question. Usually, these arguments devolve into an appeal to canonical insecurities, the unspoken assertion that any serious student of literature cannot afford a knowledge gap in the shape of this text. And, in truth, such an argument is easy to make for a collection as foundational as *One Thousand and One Nights*.

But that's such a joyless reason to read these stories.

Consider, instead, perhaps the most pleasurable sensation a reader can encounter—that feeling of being nestled in the lap of a story, fully removed from the surrounding world and concerned only with a need to know what happens next. One might study syntax and structure and use of language and all manner of literary devices, but this one thing, this magnetic thing, when it happens, is a distillation of all that is joyful about storytelling. Anyone who as a child stayed up past bedtime with a flashlight and a paperback under the covers, anyone who's ever sat by the campfire waiting on the climax of a good ghost story, anyone who has been made to momentarily cast the real world loose in favor of a fictional one knows this feeling intimately.

And this, for all its flaws and convolutions, is what *One Thousand and One Nights* does. Every tale, by design, is a magnet. How can Ali Baba, a man seemingly oblivious to everything but his own material desires, possibly survive the murderous intent of forty would-be killers? How did three strangers all end up in the same place, all missing an eye? Will Shahrazad escape the psychopathic insecurity of her husband, who has already executed more than a thousand wives? A man accidentally kills the son of a jinni and the jinni vows revenge, and instantly we need to know how the man will escape certain death. Fate brings a dervish to a paradisiacal harem beyond his wildest dreams, where he is told the only rule is that he not enter one of the harem's ninety-nine rooms, and instantly we need to know what will happen once he enters that room, because of course he will. More than any of the Orientalist tropes it has helped launch into the Western cultural lexicon, it is this sense of magnetic storytelling that makes *One Thousand and One Nights* a foundational text, its stories an adhesive on the walls of memory.

There are few more devotional odes in all of literature to the act of *telling* a story. The passport on which the narrators of *One Thousand and One Nights* travel is not one of state or religion or tribe—each is a citizen of the telling. Commoners, trembling before the wrath of kings and beasts, beg for their lives by reciting poetry. A narrator relates a fable about a queen relating a fable about a caliph relating a fable in which he pauses, halfway, to digress into another fable. The penalty for an uncompelling tale is usually death, or worse. What emerges is a series of parables in which all the fiery jinn and island-size crabs and half-stone men are in the end subservient to the story itself, its inherent tension and movement and pull.

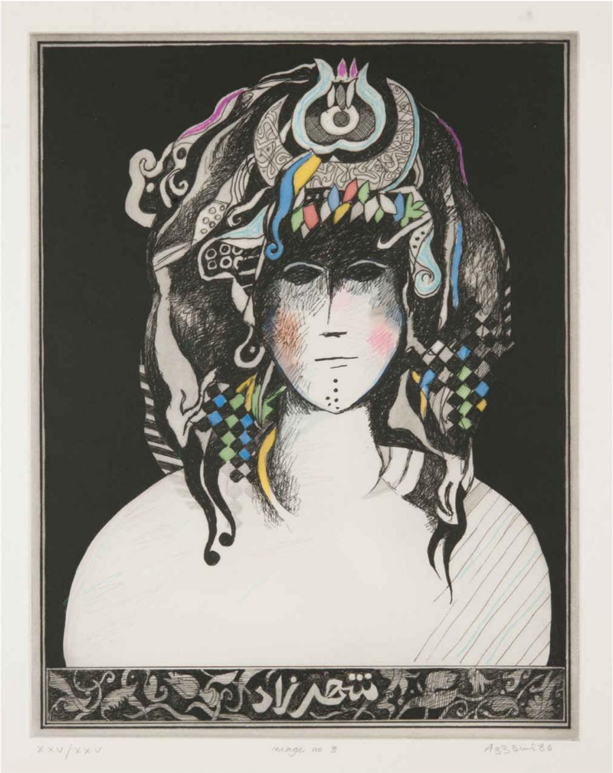
One of the very first pieces of fiction I remember reading was a children's comic book adaptation of *Aladdin* (a version that omitted a few of the story's more troubling details and imposed the now-famous "one lamp, three wishes" formula). Later I would watch the Disney movie and, years after that, I would finally read a translation of the original. And every time, even in adulthood, my reaction was the same as when I first came across the story as a child—a surrender to wonder. Has anyone exposed to Aladdin not immediately started dreaming up what they would do with those wishes? It is as universal a reflex as exists in literature.

As I suspect is the case in every society, there are certain cultural touchstones one becomes familiar with not so much through formal education but rather through a kind of social osmosis. I strongly suspect few if any of my Arab friends have read a version of *One Thousand and One Nights* in its entirety. But virtually all of them have seen the myriad melodrama-laden soap operas based on the stories that seem to pop up on all the Middle Eastern TV networks every Ramadan. Virtually all of them have seen the characters of Aladdin and Sindbad and Shahrazad used to hawk everything from mascara to fried chicken. Virtually all of them have seen some piece of artwork inspired by the palaces and jinn and grand dreamscapes of the text. And, without doubt, virtually all of them have seen these stories passed through the Western lens and redirected back as strange and exoticized creatures of literature's vast negative space—what someone else thinks our stories mean.

In this way, Yasmine Seale's masterful new translation is a balm against the rash of previous efforts to render *One Thousand and One Nights* as, first and foremost, a hyperexotic and salacious land of endless otherness—an otherness that, one can't help but suspect, must consciously or subconsciously bleed into the translator's view of the people from whose lands these stories originate. Eschewing this fixation, Seale instead opts for a linguistic and tonal precision that allows the tales to stand on their own narrative footing. The result is a text in which the creative genius of these stories, not some constant reminder of their *foreignness*, takes center stage. Coupled with Paulo Horta's years-long research into the Syrian writer Hanna Diyab's foundational role in crafting many of the stories previously thought to be French inventions, this new translation serves as more than just another update to an ancient text. It is, in many ways, an unprecedented illumination of *One Thousand and One Nights* as narrative, cultural, and historical document.

Every story in the global canon of fantastical literature is in some way a vessel shipwrecked on the rocks of its misinterpretation. Modern retellings of the Grimm brothers' fairy tales now largely do away with all the violence and incest endemic to the originals. We have inverted Peter Pan in the popular consciousness, using the name to describe the phenomenon of a man who refuses to stop acting like a boy, when the character was in fact partly inspired by the death of J. M. Barrie's brother at just thirteen years of age—a boy who never got the chance to become a man. Assessed in these terms, *One Thousand and One Nights* is perhaps the greatest and most sprawling ruin of them all, a vast and forever incomplete compendium of stories leached from at least half a dozen cultural traditions and subjected to countless translations, the majority of them undertaken by writers from outside those cultures. Some of the most popular narrative hallmarks inspired by the stories, such as the jinni that grants only three wishes, are after-the-fact alterations. Even within the text, real historical figures show up in stories that are supposed to have taken place hundreds of years before those figures were born. There's not even consensus on the most basic structural questions, such as which or how many stories to include.

But, in their own way, these fractures and contradictions are what give *One Thousand and One Nights* its diaphanous texture, its electricity, its life. Absent some unimpeachable, authoritative version of the text, what carries these stories through the centuries is the sense that, as with poems conjured from nothing in some ancient coffeehouse under the building blue of dawn, every telling is a parcel of newness, an experience never to be re-created.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Shahrazad. *Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.*

INTRODUCTION

STORYTELLERS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

THE STORIES OF the *Arabian Nights* have had an almost unrivaled influence on world literature and popular culture.[1] In the centuries since they were first told to rapt audiences on the streets of Cairo or read in elegant editions produced in Paris and London, the stories of Sinbad and Shahrazad, Ali Baba and Aladdin, have taken root in the imaginations of readers around the world and inspired countless literary imitations and cinematic adaptations. In English novelist A. S. Byatt's summation, "This story has everything a tale should have. Sex, death, treachery, vengeance, magic, humor, warmth, wit, surprise and a happy ending."[2] Few of the millions of fans of the *Arabian Nights* are familiar with the journey the tales took to appear in the story collections, theater productions, and film spectacles with which they are familiar, but the movement of these stories across borders and between languages is a multifaceted tale in itself—and one that does much to explain their unique narrative force.

The *Arabian Nights* is not one distinct work but rather a collective product of imagination whose origins stretch over centuries and draw upon diverse cultural traditions. Given unity only by a few core stories and the storyteller Shahrazad, the *Nights* is uniquely resistant to any effort to firmly define its form and content. The original Arabic versions of *One Thousand and One Nights*, which coalesced from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, offered readers an ever-changing sequence of tales as new stories were added or familiar motifs were reassembled and rewritten in new ways. As these stories entered other languages in translation, this pattern continued. The result is not so much a book as a sprawling, contradictory spiral of stories—in some cases stretching over sixteen volumes. As a story collection, the *Arabian Nights* possesses a remarkable ability to mutate in the hands of the innumerable storytellers and editors and translators who have reimagined it from new perspectives and rewritten it in new languages. The inherent fluidity of the collection seems to invite readers and authors to make it their own, and its literary acolytes range from Charles Dickens to Wole Soyinka, James Joyce to Charlotte Brontë, Edgar Allan Poe to Jorge Luis Borges.

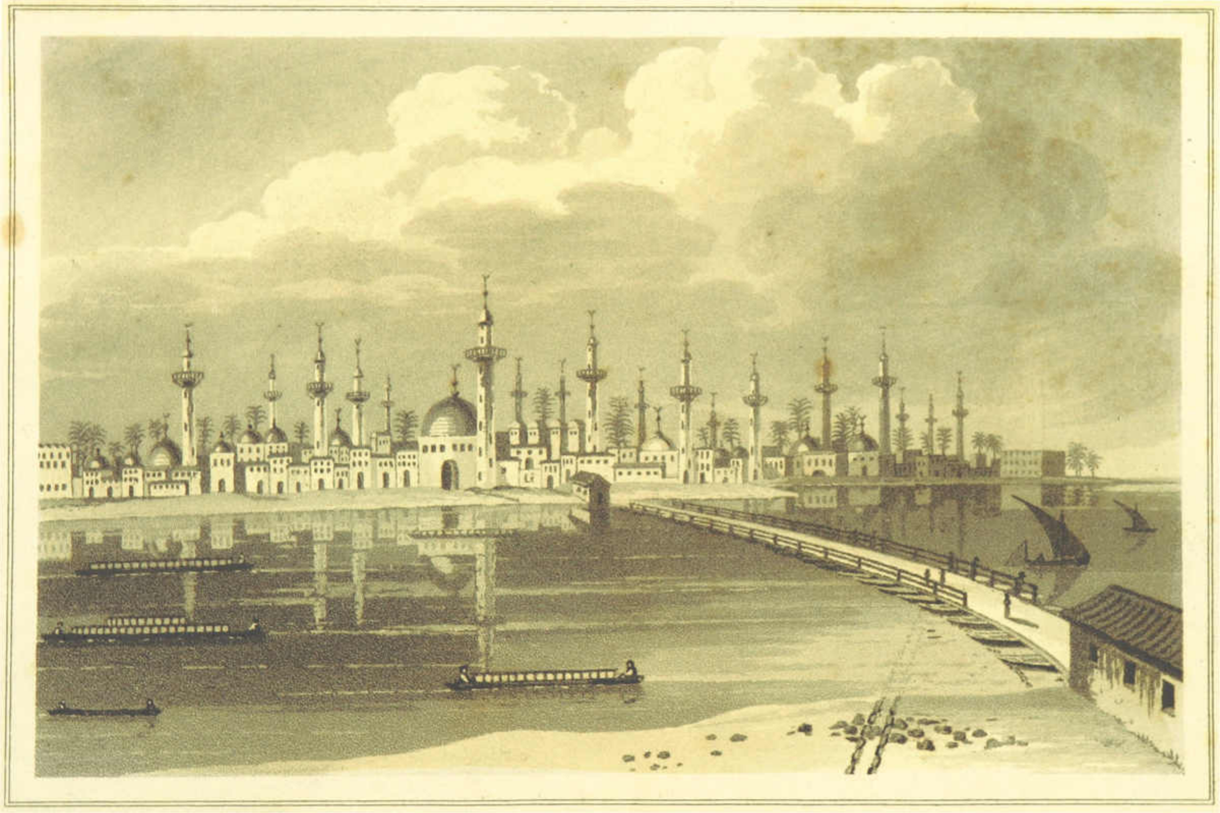
An irresistible invitation to enter this narrative world appears in the opening tale of sex, violence, and betrayal. Long ago, two brothers who ruled over kingdoms in India and China discover that they have been betrayed by their respective wives. The older and more powerful brother, Shahriyar, is damaged so deeply that he embarks on a campaign of vengeance in which he marries a young woman every night and has her killed the next morning. A trusted vizier is tasked with the job of procuring and discarding the brides. He is able temporarily to shield his own two daughters, Shahrazad and Dunyazad, from the king’s monstrous appetites, but the number of Shahriyar’s victims continues to mount. In some versions of this opening frame tale, the king marries and murders every day for three years, drawing his brides from every branch of society. Horrified by this endless cycle of destruction, Shahrazad volunteers to marry the king in an effort to save the lives of the women of her kingdom. She is a clever girl, well versed in science, philosophy, poetry, and history, and she has a plan. Each night, she will offer her husband a marvelous tale so fascinating that Shahriyar will delay Shahrazad’s execution one more day so she can finish the story. It is a case of survival by cliffhanger.

And so the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights* arrive in the voice of Shahrazad, who pours all her knowledge and ingenuity into tales designed to bewitch a murderous king. Shahrazad's predicament becomes the justification for assembling in one collection a series of stories filled with unexpected incidents, ingenious protagonists, supernatural beings, and suspenseful twists and turns. This frame structure ensured that a core of *Nights* stories would survive over the centuries, but it also encouraged storytellers and compilers of later volumes to elaborate this web of stories by adding and remixing story elements to provide more and more nights of tales. The idea of "one thousand and one" nights of storytelling was always an aspiration rather than a reality. Scholars have not yet found an Arabic version containing 1001 nights of stories that predates the French translation. In fact, the superstitious say that anyone who reads the full thousand and one nights of storytelling will die. But the compulsion to somehow reach a point of completion—and perhaps also to fulfill Shahrazad's mission to save herself and her kingdom—produced an ever-changing collection of stories filled with echoes and contradictions. The *Arabian Nights* today offers readers a bewildering array of tale genres that foreshadow all the styles that define storytelling today—suspense, horror, crime, fantasy, adventure, romance.

In this edition, these tales take flight anew in the bold and lyrical translation of Yasmine Seale, which breaks decisively with the masculine dynasty of English translators of the *Nights*. The indisputable power of storytelling emerges in this breathtaking rendering by a translator seeking to recover Shahrazad's voice and to dramatize the predicament of the imperiled storyteller. The virtuosity of plot and the sheer force of imagination embodied in these tales won them a worldwide audience centuries ago, often through anonymous translations from the eighteenth-century French edition that added stories such as "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." Subsequent English translations often obscured the brilliance of the storytelling through exotic additions by travelers and translators who seized upon the tales as raw material for their misadventures in the "Orient." In her new translation, Seale reclaims the vitality and the delight of these stories as she works with equal poise from both Arabic and French, stripping away the "Orientalism" with which they have long been laden in English letters.

BEGINNINGS: *ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS*

THE ORIGINS OF *One Thousand and One Nights* can be found in the literary cultures of India and Persia. Ancient Indian story collections such as the *Panchatantra* offer early examples of the use of frame tales like that of Shahriyar and Shahrazad to bring a series of related stories together, and one Sanskrit text even tells of a royal concubine who entertains a ruler with a story whose resolution is withheld on a nightly basis.[3] The opening tale of the *Nights* echoes a number of motifs from Indian narrative traditions, but the names of the characters suggest the importance of a Persian context in the genesis of the story collection that we know today. In Persian, Shahriyar's name means "Ruler of the World," and the text clearly identifies him as a king of the Sasanian Dynasty that ruled Persia before the Arab conquest in the seventh century CE. Shahrazad's name, also Persian, means "of noble appearance or ancestry."[4] Her earliest known appearance in an Arabic text comes in a manuscript fragment from the ninth century CE, in which she is asked by her sister Dunyazad to tell stories of "the excellencies and shortcomings, the cunning and stupidity, the generosity and avarice, and the courage and cowardice that are in man"—stories pertaining to the customs or characteristics of the Syrian and the Bedouin.[5] The tale of Shahrazad was translated into Arabic by the eighth century, and a frame story with roots in India and Persia became a repository for tales pertaining to the wider Arab world. From the very start, the *Nights* stories took shape at the intersection of different narrative cultures.

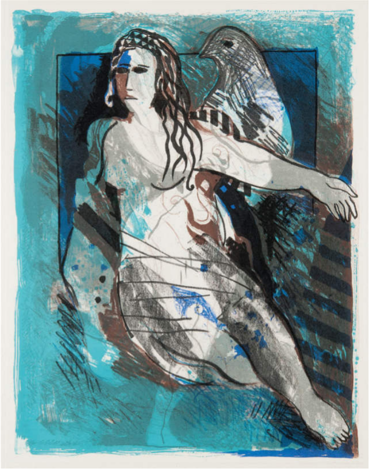


View of Baghdad or the Persian Side of the Tigris, *from Abraham Parsons*, Travels in Asia and Africa *(London, 1808).*

The twelfth-century records of a Jewish bookseller in Cairo indicate that the stories of Shahrazad were circulating in Arabic under the title of *Alf Layla wa-Layla*, or *One Thousand and One Nights*.[6] By that time, many threads of storytelling had been woven together in the story collection. The only constant elements were the frame tale and a few early story cycles, all but one included in this edition: “The Merchant and the Jinni,” “The Fisherman and the Jinni,” “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” “The Hunchback,” and “The Three Apples.”[7] This original core drew heavily on what were known in Arabic as tales of *ajaʾib*—stories of marvels, wonders, and astonishing things—and utilized a series of narrative devices intended to generate surprise and delight in their listeners or readers. These early stories are never simply linear. Instead, they have complex structures that include layers of embedded narrative in which different characters take on the role of Shahrazad to tell their own story or relate some kind of exemplary tale. “The Hunchback” story cycle, for example, includes five embedded tales, and one of these tales serves as a frame for inserting seven more tales in an additional layer of storytelling. In some cases, characters tell their story in an effort to save a life, while in other cases, stories are told to distract or persuade or to deliver a particular lesson relevant to the plot. These techniques for embedding narrative made it easy to incorporate new stories that employed similar themes, plot motifs, or character types as the collection was remade by new storytellers and editors.

Arabic versions of *The Thousand and One Nights* multiplied and flourished in lands ruled by a series of Islamic states beginning with the Abbasid Caliphate, established in the eighth century with its capital at Baghdad. As Abbasid power faded and the Arab world fragmented into a series of competing states that each claimed the title of caliphate, the *Nights* continued to thrive in centers such as Damascus and Cairo, where it incorporated more and more stories that appealed to a growing audience for astonishing tales. Existing story motifs were replicated or recombined, and new elements were introduced as the story collection absorbed elements of oral storytelling traditions and responded to the language of classical Arabic texts. The result was a bewildering array of genres—from fantastic voyages to trickster tales, from heroic epics to animal fables, from devotional literature to urban mysteries.

Despite its many delights, *One Thousand and One Nights* was never accepted as part of the classical Arabic canon for several reasons: The collection was essentially authorless; it had no stable, authoritative form; and it was not written in a consistent literary style. Even as recently as 1956, an Arabist insisted: “It is Arabic and at the same time it is not,” for “every connoisseur of the genuinely Arabic will feel in the complex whole of the modern ‘1001 Nights’ something diluted, impoverished, superficial and fictitious.”[8] More recently, Arabists have reclaimed *One Thousand and One Nights* as part of a “middle literature” positioned between popular and classical Arabic and composed for an audience drawn principally from the mercantile class. In accordance with this distinct social location, the language of the *Nights* was generally Middle Arabic, and therefore neither purely colloquial nor purely literary. The tales often featured merchants as characters or were set in a major Arab city in a particular time period. The story collection has therefore been seen as a “mirror for merchants”—a mixture of tales responding to the concerns and values of this class as well as satisfying the universal desire for an entertaining story.[9]



In “The Story of Julnar of the Sea,” the daughter of one of the kings of the ocean arrives in the court of the king of Khorasan as a mysterious slave and becomes the mother of the king’s heir. This story provides the most extensive glimpse of the kingdoms of merfolk beneath the sea in The Thousand and One Nights. *Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.*

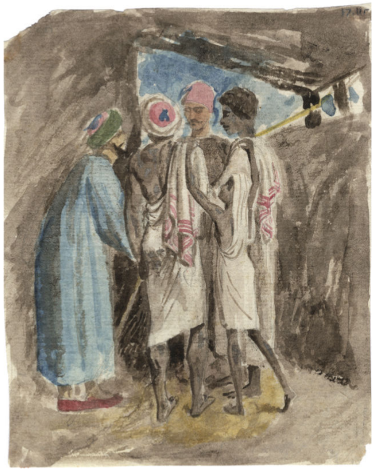
From the beginning, *One Thousand and One Nights* had to compete in a cultural realm in which poetry was considered the most esteemed literary form in Arabic. Stories such as those collected in the *Nights* were seen by some as merely *khurafa*, absurd fantasies suitable only for women and children. Yet storytellers and scribes also responded to classical Arabic texts and absorbed elements of *adab* literature—which embodied the values of a refined urban elite.[10] Perhaps the clearest evidence of this is the insertion of poetry into many of the tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, where it invokes the same poetic images and metaphors that defined classical verse in Arabic. In 1915, one scholar counted about 1,420 poems inserted into the *Nights*, and much of this verse can be attributed to established poets writing in the tenth to the fourteenth centuries.[11] These poetic insertions serve a variety of purposes—expressing emotions such as grief or passionate love, capturing the impact of beauty, transmitting a piece of folk wisdom, or advancing the plot by persuading a character to follow a different path. Beyond these efforts to elevate the style of the tales, some scribes insisted on the educative value of the stories themselves. A preface appended to the fifteenth-century manuscript used to produce the first French translation of the stories claims that “the purpose of writing this agreeable and entertaining book is the instruction of those who peruse it, for it abounds with highly edifying histories and excellent lessons for the people of distinction.”[12]

In the end, *One Thousand and One Nights* was considered important enough to be preserved in the collections of mosques and monasteries throughout the Middle East. According to the Arabist scholar and novelist Robert Irwin, the literary quality of the stories may vary, but “the best stories are artfully constructed, highly sophisticated fictions” that should be seen as “works of literature in the fullest sense.”[13] The value of a written text was well recognized in the Arab world, and, in the tales of the *Nights*, a character will often insist that a truly remarkable story should be written down and deposited in the treasury of the king for preservation. In “The Tale of King Muhammad Bin Sabaik and the Merchant,” for instance, the king commissions a merchant to find the most marvelous story ever, and when the merchant returns with the manuscript, the king orders his scribes to copy it in gold letters and place it in his treasury. Despite the preference of Arab intellectuals for poetry, tales such as those of the *Nights* were preserved and retold.

TALES OF MERCHANTS AND MAGIC

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *One Thousand and One Nights* has been strongly linked with the flourishing urban centers of the Arab world from the ninth century to the fourteenth. In Irwin’s succinct formulation, “The stories of the *Nights* are urban stories, written for the most part by people in the cities about people in the cities for people in the cities.”[14] Popular storytellers frequented the marketplaces of cities like Baghdad and Cairo, where they competed for attention with street entertainers and were regarded with suspicion by authorities. The audiences for their stories were the ordinary residents of the city, including merchants, tradespeople, and the marginalized classes of the poor. The appeal of these storytellers for women as well as men is confirmed by a twelfth-century market inspector’s manual from Andalusia that warns of the dangers of unchaperoned women entering the stalls of storytellers and fortune-tellers.[15]

After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria in the sixteenth century, coffee drinking and coffeehouses spread, and professional storytellers often practiced their trade in these businesses. They might receive a small weekly fee from the owner as well as tips from satisfied clients, but at these locations their audiences would be exclusively men, some perhaps of rather disreputable character. Certain Arab storytellers would narrate entire story cycles from memory, but others recited from written texts. Manuscripts of story collections like *One Thousand and One Nights* could be borrowed from booksellers for a fee or viewed in the collections of mosques. In 1794, Alexander and Patrick Russell noted that men of fashion in Aleppo were lulled to sleep with “stories told out of the *Arabian Nights* … which their women were taught to repeat for this purpose.”[16] The evidence that women must be counted among the many storytellers who took up Shahrazad’s tales and made them their own is confirmed by the contemporary research of folklorists.[17]



Joseph Bonomi, Street Scene Outside Mosque in Siout, Egypt. *English artist and architect Bonomi accompanied Robert Hay on an expedition to Egypt in 1824, sparking a lifelong interest in Egyptology. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.*

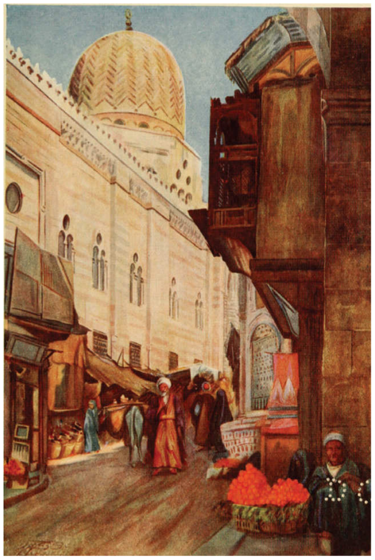
A historical account from the eighteenth century captures some sense of the atmosphere in which the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights* were enjoyed in public locations. The Russell brothers, Scottish physicians who resided in Aleppo at the end of that century, described the dramatic delivery of a storyteller who seems to perform his story from memory:

> He recites walking to and fro in the middle of the coffee room, stopping only now and then, when the expression requires some emphatical attitude. He is commonly heard with great attention; and not unfrequently in the midst of some interesting adventure, when the expectation of his audience is raised to the highest pitch, he breaks off abruptly and makes his escape, leaving both his hero or heroine and his audience in the utmost embarrassment. Those who happen to be near the door endeavor to detain him, insisting upon the story being finished before he departs; but he always makes his retreat good; and the auditors suspending their curiosity are induced to return at the same time the next day to hear the sequel. He has no sooner made his exit than the company in separate parties fall to disputing about the characters of the drama … with no less warmth than if the fall of the city depended on the decision.[18]

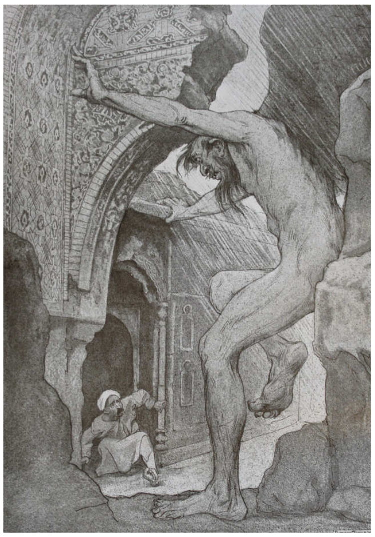
Given that the stories of the *Nights* are themselves constructed around Shahrazad's quest to ensure that the listener feels an irresistible urge to hear the story's conclusion, the tales were well suited to this kind of performance.

Retold in various urban centers of the Muslim world, it is not surprising that the *Nights* stories absorbed the ethos of these cities and incorporated their distinctive geography. Cities are crucial to these stories—they are a haven of safety, a hub drawing people and goods from all over the region, and a pinnacle of cultural achievement. Abbasid Baghdad was the first of the cities to leave its mark on the tales as they developed from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Some of the story cycles of the Arabic core—including "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad"—contain traces of the cosmopolitan culture, the busy markets, and the powerful court of Baghdad of this time. There are sometimes tantalizing glimpses of the palaces and gardens that occupied the west bank of the Tigris River and the souqs and poorer neighborhoods that occupied the east bank. Baghdad's influence on the development of the *Nights* is also evident in the appearance of Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (who ruled from 786 to 809 CE) as a character in a number of stories. These tales, added long after the caliph's death, reflect his legendary status rather than historical fact. In the *Nights*, the Baghdad of Harun al-Rashid is cloaked in a nostalgia for a "Golden Age" of Abbasid rule marked by prosperity and cultural achievement. Retold and rewritten in a period of civil strife initiated by Rashid's death, the stories of the *Nights* invested an idealized Harun al-Rashid with the storytellers' "dreams of justice, wealth, beauty, humor, love, and luxury."[19]

As Abbasid Baghdad lost its dominance, Damascus and Cairo took on greater importance as centers of Islamic cultural life and made their own mark on the expanding corpus of the *Nights*. At least one of the added stories—"The Wiles of Women"—traces a specific geography of Damascus that includes the area below the Citadel where lower-class entertainers and criminals gathered.[20] Other stories added in Egypt between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries reflect key preoccupations within the popular culture of Cairo: magic objects and supernatural beings, the trials and tribulations of merchants and tradesmen, and the crazy (and sometimes comic) escapades of rogues and thieves within the city's criminal underclass. "Maʿruf the Cobbler" begins in a shop in Darb al-Ahmar, a real street just outside the Zuwayla Gate in Cairo, and takes its protagonist on a wild adventure to the outskirts of the city, where he receives help from a jinni. Stories continued to be added and revised in Egyptian versions of *One Thousand and One Nights* well into the eighteenth century—and stories that are set in Baghdad may incorporate distinctly Cairene themes and social features in these later versions. A story such as "Dalila the Crafty," for instance, is set in Baghdad but embodies the spirit of Cairo's popular classes. Chronicling the ingenious ruses of a female thief, the narrative unfolds against a backdrop of notoriously corrupt officials and struggling merchants and shopowners, and it celebrates the tricksters and rogues who survive through their boldness and wit.



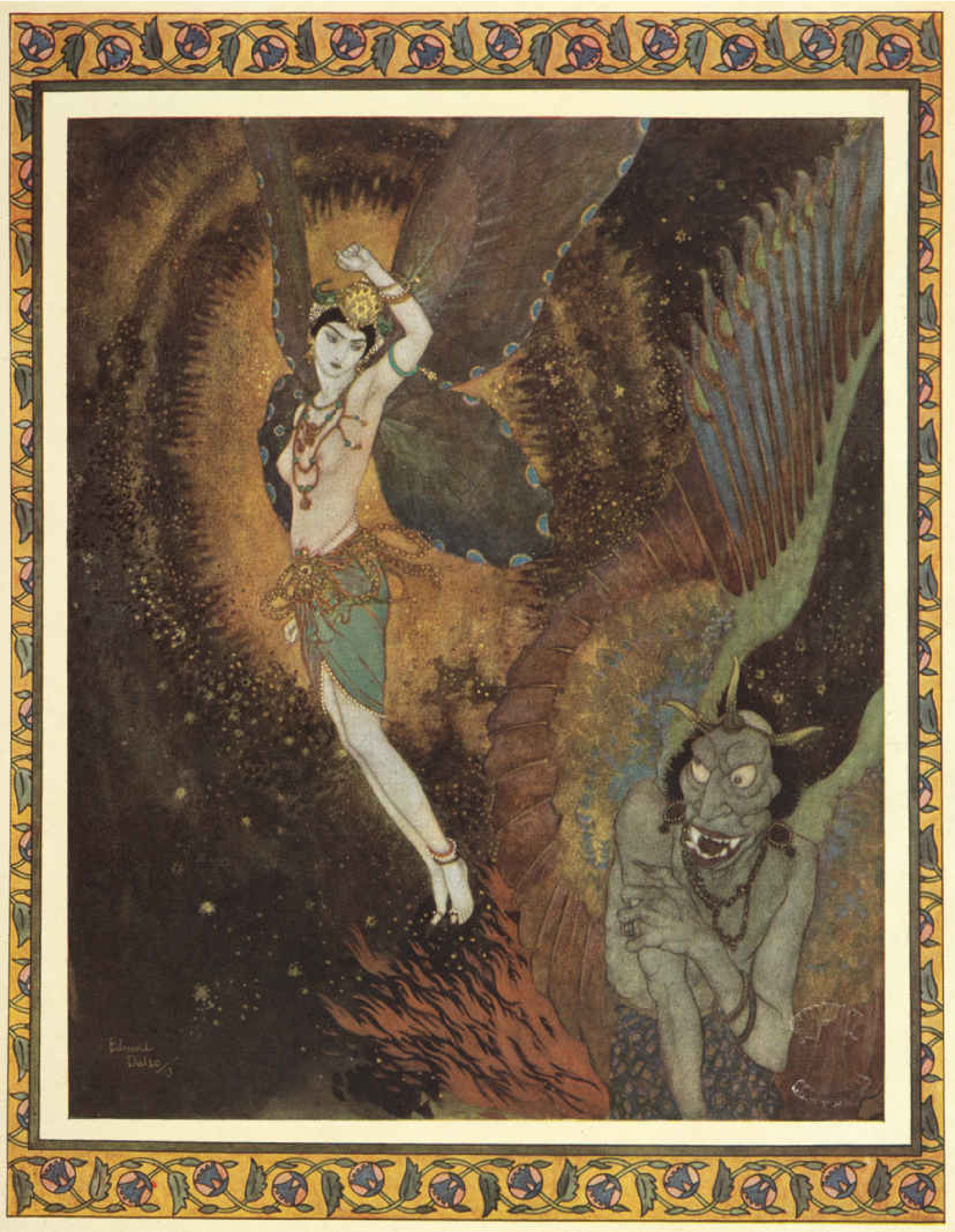
The Dome of the Mosque of Sultan al-Muayyad from the Bab Zuwayla Gate in Cairo. *Illustration by W. S. S. Tyrwhitt from* Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus *by David S. Margoliouth (1912).*



Maʿruf the Cobbler meets a jinni. Illustration by Fernand Schultz-Wettel from a Swedish edition of One Thousand and One Nights.

The values of Islam permeate the *Nights*, despite the appearance of a significant number of disreputable characters on its pages. As stories were incorporated from other traditions, they were adapted to a Muslim cultural context, with social relationships and moral codes transformed to reflect the tenets of Islam. Occasionally a story will take a didactic turn to dramatize the fate of those who fail to heed the warning of prophets, but generally a Muslim worldview simply forms the background against which a compelling plot unfolds. Members of minority religious communities—Christians and Jews who were part of the cosmopolitan cities of these Islamic states—make select appearances in the tales. A few stories feature a romantic relationship between a Christian and a Muslim character, but conversion to Islam is the necessary resolution to such a tale.[21] Beyond these essential markers of belief, fate is the critical force that seems to drive the plots in *One Thousand and One Nights*. In these stories, however, fate can be understood to be the means by which God's will operates in the world. Even the supernatural intervention of a jinni can be seen as a manifestation of the will of God, with the outcome of such an event depending on what God ultimately decrees.

The magical practices and supernatural creatures that are so appealing for readers of the *Nights* reflect popular beliefs in the cities where the tales thrived. Despite official disapproval of the practice of magic within Islam, the possibility of enchantments and the existence of spirits such as jinn were accepted by the audience for these stories. Magic was understood as the ability to understand and manipulate the hidden forces that lie behind the visible world, and some scholars made space for it by distinguishing between "white" magic (based on forces within the domain of God) and "black" magic (which relied on the aid of the Devil). The *Nights* tales contain many examples of magical practices that flourished in the Arabic-speaking world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: divination and geomancy, sympathetic magic, the conjuring of spirits, and the use of talismans and amulets. The jinn who feature so prominently in *One Thousand and One Nights* are, according to the Qur'an, neither angels nor demons. Creatures of fire, jinn can be either malevolent or helpful to humans, and they appear in the *Nights* within a recognizable world of realistic settings along with cannibalistic ghouls, merfolk, sorcerers, magical objects, and secret spells.[22] For many readers, it is this seamless blend of the everyday and the supernatural that is the most characteristic feature of the *Nights*.



"The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur" begins when two jinn debate whether Prince Qamar of the Khalidan Islands or Princess Budur of the Islands of China is the most beautiful. The princess is magically transported to the prince's side, and the two fall in love without knowing

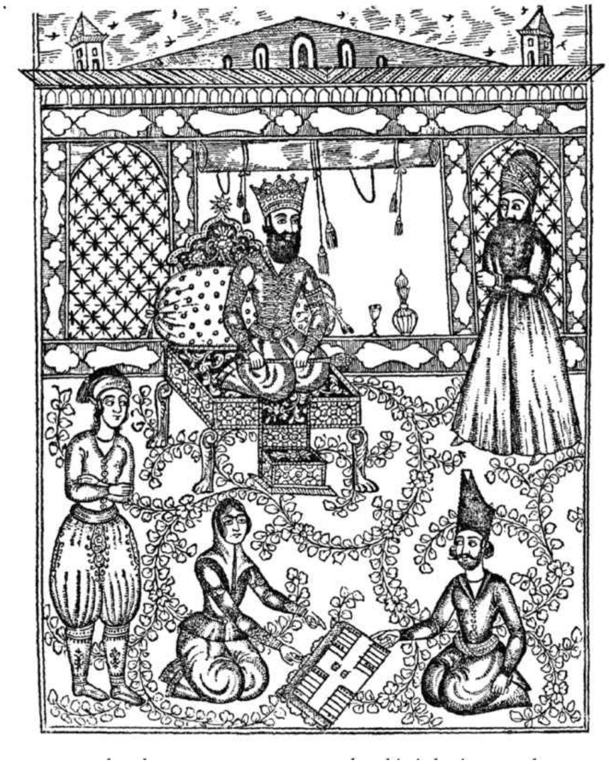
each other's identity. Illustration by Edmund Dulac, Princess Badoura: A Tale from the Arabian Nights, *retold by Laurence Housman (London, 1913).*

Despite the popular association of the *Nights* with tales of magic and helpful jinn, the collection contains a number of stories that echo the essential tensions contained in the frame tale of Shahrazad and Shahriyar. Many of the core stories included here involve episodes of violence, sex, and cruelty. These are not necessarily the stories you might remember from the abridged versions of the *Nights* for children. Several of these tales are constructed around an imminent threat of violence, but they also showcase the power of stories to avert this threat. Beyond the original core, other tales in the *One Thousand and One Nights* feed upon the fundamental conflict in the frame tale between a misogynistic ruler and a woman seeking to end his misuse of power by engaging in a debate on the relative qualities and merits of men and women. The collection thus includes a series of urbane tales pitting women against men, who face off in storytelling relays framed by narratives of sexual intrigue. These tales raise important issues of justice and governance within Islamic society, but above all they glorify the role of the storyteller—revealing that even pitiless jinn and homicidal sultans are susceptible to the enchantment of a well-told story.

In the Arabic manuscripts of *One Thousand and One Nights*, we do not learn definitively whether Shahriyar's murderous rage finally eases as Shahrazad tells her stories. The tales unfold in accordance with a single dictate—to hold the listener in the storyteller's power until another day has dawned. As Shahrazad narrates her marvelous tales, she feeds and frustrates the curiosity of her new husband and ensures her own survival. As she pauses her tale each night, her sister Dunyazad offers praise for these stories and Shahrazad in turn promises Shahriyar even more wonders the next night. These interruptions seldom indicate what the king thinks of this elaborate performance, but the storyteller lives on and the stories unfold night after night. While Victorian readers might expect a happy ending to Shahrazad's brave effort to save her kingdom, the Arabic manuscripts do not offer such an easy resolution. In this respect, the *Nights* speaks less to the conventions of the European fairy tale than to the dystopian mode of contemporary fictional works such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, whose ambiguous ending offers no certainty of freedom.

VOYAGE TO EUROPE: ANTOINE GALLAND AND HANNA DIYAB

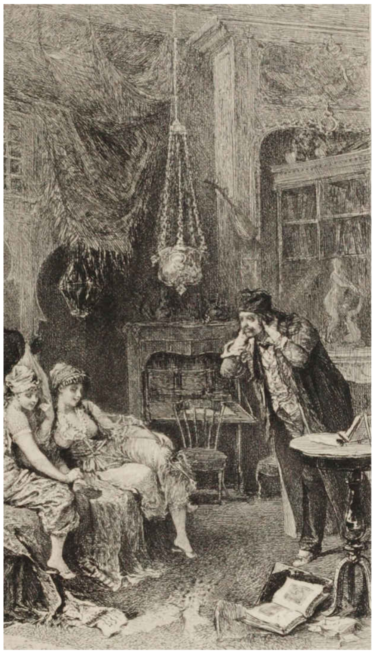
EVEN BEFORE the first French translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* was produced by Antoine Galland in the early eighteenth century, some of the stories associated with the *Nights* were already circulating in Europe. The tale of the intellectual feats of the slave Tawaddud, for instance, appeared in medieval Spain and perhaps influenced analogous tales in medieval English literature. Some scholars speculate that the *Nights*, and other Arabic story collections like the *One Hundred and One Nights*, inspired European frame-tale collections such as Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.[23] Others note that the caliph-for-a-day motif in "The Sleeper and the Waker" is echoed in the frame tale of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.[24] These trickles of influence would quickly become a flood when Galland's translation, *Les mille et une nuits*, appeared in French.



When her young master squanders his inheritance, the slave Tawaddud suggests he sell her to Caliph Harun al-Rashid. At the court of the caliph, she triumphs over the greatest scholars in theology, physiology, astronomy, and philosophy and bests the court's champions at chess and backgammon. From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of The Thousand and One Nights. *Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

Antoine Galland was an accomplished classicist who had been dispatched on French diplomatic missions to the Ottoman Empire during a period when France was pursuing closer commercial ties with the Levant. Not an established literary figure in the salons of Enlightenment Paris, he was instead a scholar of languages and a numismatic specialist who had acquired Arabic, Persian, and Turkish during his travels on behalf of the French state. As a collector of Oriental manuscripts for the royal library and a contributor to the *Bibliothèque orientale*, Galland played an important role in facilitating the development of Orientalist scholarship in France.[25] Galland's first translation related to the *Nights* was produced in 1701—a version of the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor from an Arabic manuscript acquired in Istanbul. After this, Galland sought out more stories like that of Sinbad, and he managed to acquire a Syrian manuscript of *One Thousand and One Nights* from a friend in the Middle East. As he published the first volume of his French translation of this manuscript, Galland presented his goals as educative rather than aesthetic, inviting his readers to “profit by the examples of Virtue and Vice” that they would find in the stories.[26] In this regard, he was not unlike some Arab scribes who tried to invest the *One Thousand and One Nights* with moral and educational value.

Published in twelve volumes between 1704 and 1717, Galland’s version of the story collection—*Les mille et une nuits*—became a cultural sensation in France. Appearing in the wake of the fad for fairy tales, or *contes de fées*, Shahrazad’s tales were initially received under this convenient rubric. The Barbin publishing house, managed by Marie Cochart after her husband’s death, had caused a sensation with its edition of Perrault’s *Mother Goose* in 1697, and now it used Galland’s translation to consolidate its hold on this profitable market. Translating and transforming the stories from his Syrian manuscript, Galland hit on a winning formula that fed the appetite for fairy tales in France and appealed to readers beyond its borders as his work was translated into additional languages. A bootleg version in English—the anonymous “Grub Street” edition—was published almost immediately and enjoyed great popular success.[27]



French author Théophile Gautier exemplifies the Orientalist fantasies that flourished in the nineteenth century. Fascinated by "the Orient" from his youth, Gautier founded the "Club des Hashischins," a group of artists who gathered in pseudo-Oriental settings to indulge in the pleasures of hashish. In 1842, he wrote "The Thousand and Second Night," in which Shahrazad and her sister drop in on the French narrator, who then provides them with an Orientalist love story to deliver to King Shahriyar. Detail from an illustration by Adolphe Lalauze from La Mille et Deuxième Nuit *(Paris, 1898).*

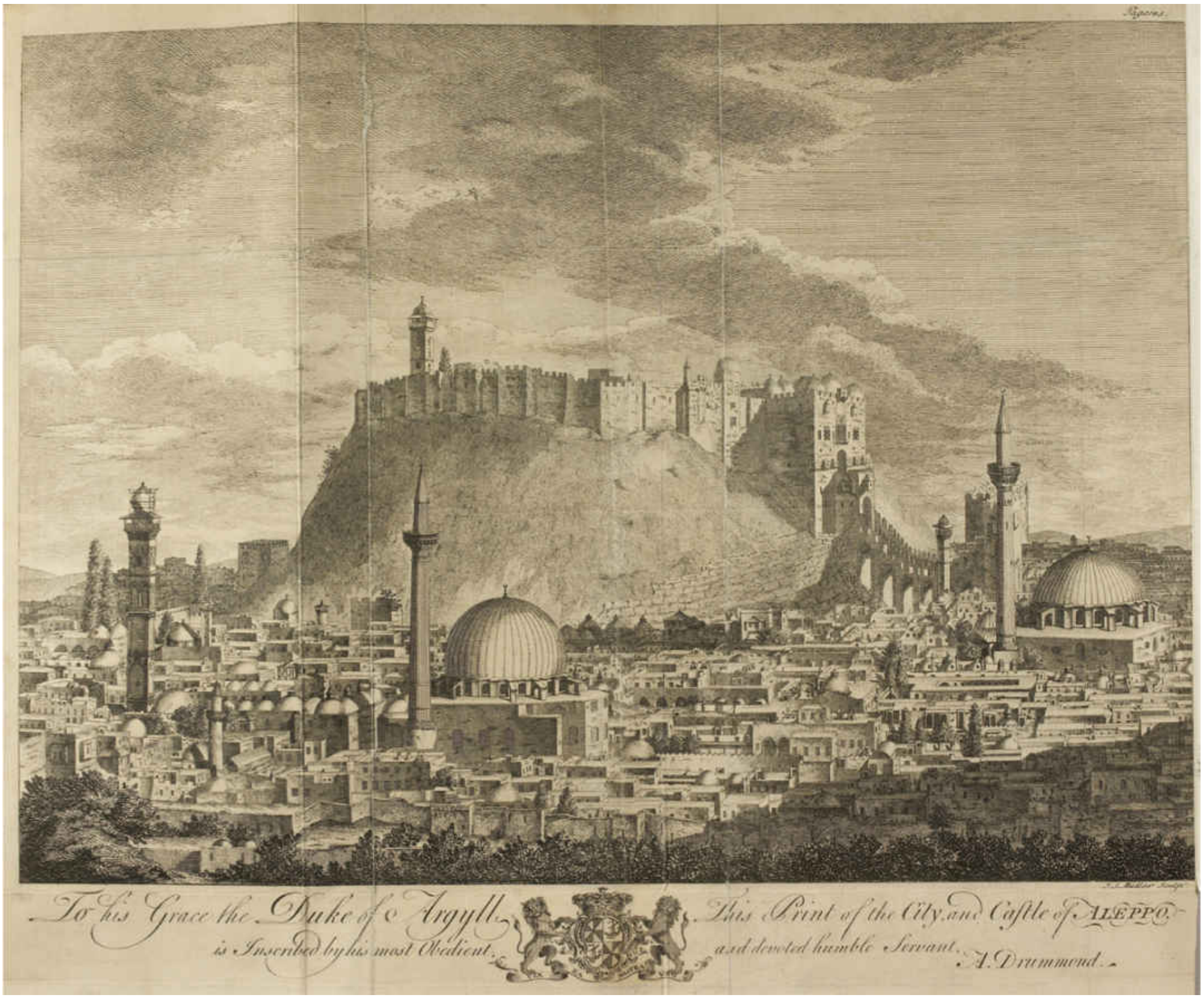
The enormous impact of Galland's work has led some literary critics to claim that the French translator is the de facto author of the *Arabian Nights* known by Western readers today.[28] His translation added a veneer of French literary style to a sequence of stories that represented a wide variety of origins and tonalities. Shahrazad now spun her stories with a distinctly French accent—an accent that concealed the many differences between the tales assembled by scribes and storytellers in Arabic and the stories compiled for French readers who cared little for the claims of authenticity. His admirers argue that Galland opened up the tales in terms of character and storytelling so they could resonate with mainstream literary trends in French prose. For these critics, the modern appeal of the *Nights* tales rests in how they were transformed by Galland and taken up by Diderot and Voltaire, leading to their prominent place in European modernity. Other critics, however, have countered the suggestion that the Arabic text was only rudimentary raw material that required reworking by a French master and instead stress the innovative qualities of the original Arabic tales and their subversive influence on established modes of literary production.

Galland's influence on the reception of the *Nights* was enormous, and perhaps most important, he was responsible for the addition of some of the most famous stories associated with the story collection. A new market for tales from the "Orient" had emerged as the early volumes of *Les mille et une nuits* appeared in print, and French readers clamored for more. Galland had inserted his translation of "Sinbad the Sailor" into the third volume,[29] but as he approached volume eight of his translation, he found himself at the end of the 282 nights in his unfinished Arabic manuscript. As other Orientalist translators entered the market with their own offerings of tales translated from Arabic, Persian, or Turkish sources, Galland's publisher did what copyists and scribes of the Arab world had done many times before: She inserted tales that were not part of the original *One Thousand and One Nights* to complete the eighth volume (published in 1709).[30]

Galland initially objected to his publisher's decision to include in this eighth volume translations from Turkish sources done by his rival François Pétis de la Croix, but the authenticity of a text mattered little for early eighteenth-century French publishers, who found success touting not only modern sequels to the Greek classics but also volumes that bordered on forgeries. Responding to this pressure, Galland agreed to insert tales that did not appear in his *Nights* manuscript into the next four volumes of *Les mille et une nuits*. The source for most of these added stories was Hanna Diyab, a Maronite Christian from Aleppo. Likely twenty years of age when he met Galland, Diyab had spent the previous year and a half traveling through the Mediterranean with Paul Lucas, a French collector of treasures for the royal court of Louis XIV. After meeting Diyab at Lucas's Paris apartment on March 25, 1709, Galland noted in his diary that the young traveler "[knew] some very beautiful Arabic tales." He arranged to meet Diyab for a series of storytelling sessions from May 5 to June 6, during which the French translator took shorthand notes on fourteen fantastical stories.[31] Galland's insertion of many of these tales into *Les mille et une nuits* was arguably his most significant contribution to the development of the story collection that readers around the world would come to know and love.

THE STORYTELLER FROM ALEPPO

HANNA DIYAB, the source for the famous stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba, has only recently come into focus as a literary talent in his own right through the discovery of his memoir in the Vatican Library.[32] Diyab was born in the caravan city of Aleppo and was the youngest of several brothers. His *Book of Travels* indicates that he had spent years in the service of a French merchant before he decided to strike out on the adventure that brought him into contact with Paul Lucas. Lured by the promise of a position at the French royal court, Diyab joined Lucas on his journey through Egypt, Libya, and Tunis, and then accompanied him to Paris. When he first met Galland at Lucas's apartment in 1709, Diyab was a young man who had completed an extraordinary journey across the Mediterranean, surviving encounters with pirates and bandits, witnessing miraculous recoveries from illness, and succumbing to the mystique of a mentor who was as much a con man as a collector. Looking back on that critical encounter with Galland fifty years after the event, Diyab notes in his memoir that he met an unnamed translator who was working on the *One Thousand and One Nights* and that he supplied the old man with stories that would allow him to finish the collection. There is no indication that Diyab offered stories that he thought belonged to the story collection as he knew it. Instead, he may have retold old tales or created new ones from familiar elements, just as Arab storytellers did when practicing their trade in the coffeehouses of Aleppo.

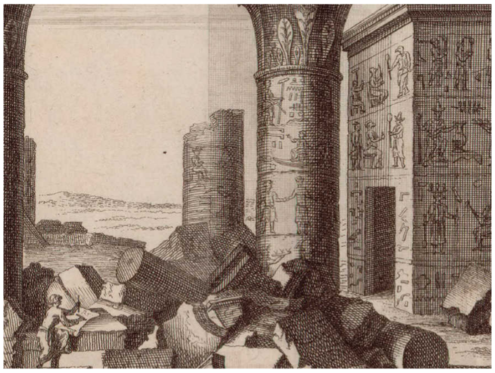

To his Grace the Duke of Argyll,
This Print of the City and Caſtle of ALEPPO
is Inscribed by his most Obedient,
and devoted humble Servant,
A. Drummond.

The City and Castle [Citadel] of Aleppo. *From Alexander Drummond*, Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia.… *(London, 1754). Courtesy of the British Library.*

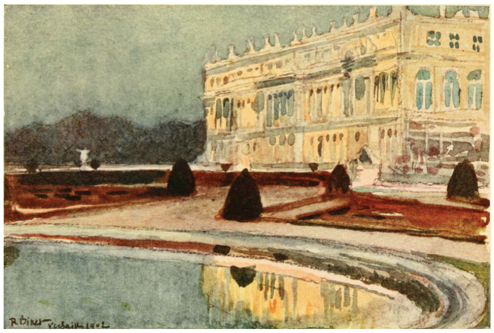
In his memoir, Diyab provides rich evidence of his own narrative skills as he weaves together some forty anecdotes and stories to form his own tale. The manuscript also shows the use of embedded stories to build suspense—particularly in the account of Diyab's arrest in Paris—demonstrating a technique typical of the Arabic tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Diyab's talents can also be seen in Galland's notes from the storytelling sessions in Paris, where the young Syrian showed the creative possibilities of linking or blending elements from the rich storytelling culture of his homeland. Diyab's "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," for example, combines three popular story elements—the magic cave, the gang of thieves, and the clever slave.[33] All of these elements existed in some form prior to Diyab's intervention, but it was his telling of the tale to Galland that first brought them together to form a new tale. The French translator recorded Diyab's oral performances of his tales in notes in his Parisian journal, and analysis of these notes suggests that Diyab's recounting was in French rather than Arabic.[34] Evidence also indicates that Galland received at least one additional tale in writing—"Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp."[35] All told, Diyab's efforts yielded ten stories that Galland added to his French text of the *Arabian Nights*, several of which would become hugely influential for modern poets, novelists, and filmmakers.

The tales added to the *Nights* through the collaborative encounters between Diyab and Galland are distinctive—featuring a more intense interest in the marvelous, in the sense of riches as well as magic. The supernatural elements in these stories—particularly the jinni of the lamp in "Aladdin" and the flying carpet in "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu"—are among the most famous images from the *Nights*. Combined with the many references in these stories to precious jewels, luxurious clothing, and elegant architecture, these powerful images have colored perceptions of the *Nights* as a whole. With little evidence to fuel their speculations, early literary scholarship attributed these marvels to Galland, who, they argued, sought to add an exotic layer of luxury and superstition that would appeal to French readers. Some critics go beyond this point to argue that Galland also gave greater psychological richness and depth to the characters in these tales. Indeed, according to the editor of the most recent edition of Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, the French translator was able to take the sparse notes from Diyab and turn them into compelling tales of ordinary characters caught up in extraordinary predicaments.[36]

More recently, Diyab's distinctive contributions to these *Nights* tales have been brought into clearer focus. Historians such as Robert Irwin argue that the Diyab tales are clearly rooted in popular Arabic narrative traditions that would have been accessible to the young Syrian storyteller (see Irwin's "Afterword" in this volume). If the stories reveal the imprint of Diyab's early life in the Levant, they also resonate with the spirit of his extraordinary journey with Lucas through the Mediterranean. The precious stones and rare objects that seem to be an Orientalist's image of Eastern luxury were also an obsession for Lucas, who had been commissioned to collect valuable artifacts for the court of Louis XIV. *The Book of Travels* shows that Diyab absorbed a great deal of Lucas's knowledge concerning the particular qualities of precious stones, as well as his theories about the healing powers of certain plants and amulets.[37] On the road and at sea for many months, Diyab experienced the threats posed by bandits and French privateers, and he visited the luxurious palaces occupied by French merchants and Ottoman officials—including the magnificent Tunis residence of Al-Husayn I ibn Ali, founder of the eighteenth-century Husainid Dynasty. Attuned to Lucas's taste for fantastic tales, Diyab would have had many reasons for choosing to tell Galland stories of dangerous bandits, healing apples, extravagant palaces, magic passwords, and lamps that secretly contain the power of a jinni.[38]



French treasure hunter Paul Lucas published popular travelogues about his travels in the Middle East. View of the Darmans Temple in Upper Egypt *(1700), from Lucas's* Voyage au Levant, 1699–1703 *(published in 1704).*

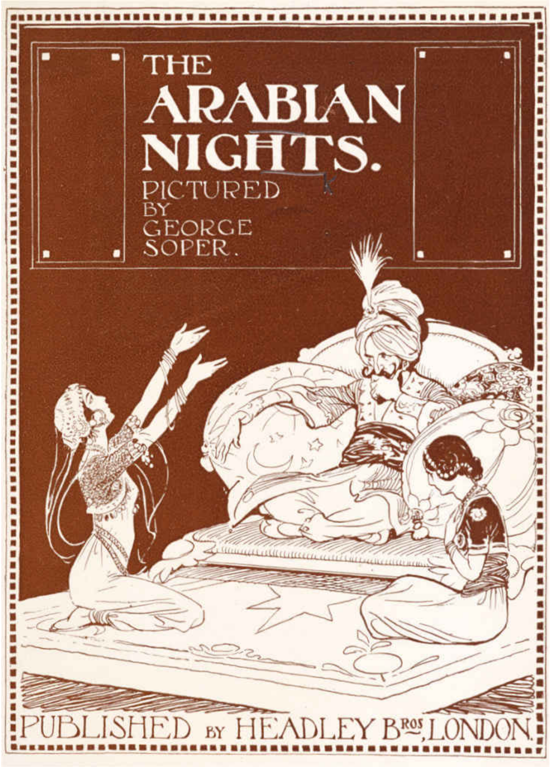


The Palace of Versailles. Illustration by René Binet, from Versailles and the Trianons *by Pierre de Nolhac (1906).*

The greater interest in psychology present in some of the added stories may also be attributed in part to the young Syrian storyteller. Diyab's account of his time in Paris in *The Book of Travels* reveals a sympathy for the struggles of common citizens that is not reflected in Galland's own writings. Diyab shows particular concern for the suffering of the poorest Parisians during the intense cold and food shortages of the horrendous winter of 1708–9. When Diyab's tales for the *Nights* are stripped of the courtly dialogues added by the French translator, they often reflect typical predicaments of merchants and struggling tradespeople. One could argue that the young Diyab had a soft spot for an adolescent hero like Aladdin—struggling to find a place for himself in a society defined by access to wealth and power. Even in their bare outlines in the notes taken by Galland, Diyab's stories give greater attention to the motives of characters than one might expect. Stories such as "The Enchanted Horse" offer moments in which the characters reveal complex inner lives, as does "The City of Gold," a story that Galland chose not to insert into the *Nights*.[39]

Ultimately, the stories added to the *Nights* through the efforts of Diyab and Galland reflect the logic of a story collection that began with an act of translation and thrived in the intersecting currents of culture in the Levant. As a hybrid literary product, they reflect the intermingling of the imaginations of two men who had traveled far and absorbed wonders worthy of the tales in *One Thousand and One Nights*. The fabulous palaces and bejeweled princesses of "Aladdin" and "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu" may have emerged from Galland's experiences at the Ottoman court as well as from Diyab's visit to the Palace of Versailles.[40] There is no doubt that Galland made additions to these story elements as he attempted to expand his notes into fabulous tales that he believed would appeal to his readers. He drew from his work as a scholar and editor to explain Islamic customs and to add exotic locations to the journeys of the three princes in "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu." The insertion of moral judgments on the behavior of characters and various nods to stereotypical gender roles are less admirable contributions by Galland to the stories that he received from Diyab.

Beneath the veneer of the French translator's style, the Diyab tales remain compulsively plot-driven stories, a fitting match for the *Nights* tales translated from Galland's Arabic manuscript. Indeed, they have benefited from being included in a collection that legitimizes the pleasure offered by a narrative that successfully harnesses surprise and wonder. The impact of these stories has been profound, as their plots and motifs have become part of the common repertoire of storytelling around the world. One scholar of folk stories, Ulrich Marzolph, has argued that among identifiable storytellers, only Hanna Diyab can be credited with the introduction of so many tale types to the narrative repertoire of the Western world. The first appearance of at least four international tale types can be traced to the stories that Diyab told Galland in 1709.[41] If these tale types now strike us as some of the most basic plots in world literature, this must be credited as much to Diyab's ability to creatively combine story elements as to Galland's decision to integrate them into his collection.

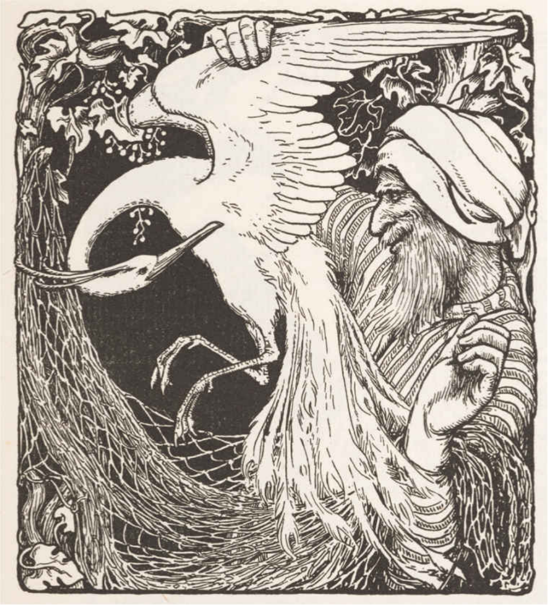

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.
PICTURED BY GEORGE SOPER.
PUBLISHED BY HEADLEY BROS, LONDON.

Shahrazad captivates the king with her stories. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(London, 1913).*

The last volume of Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* made one other notable addition to the *Arabian Nights*: It provided an ending for the story of Shahrazad and Shahriyar. As Galland produced his translation, he gradually shortened and then abandoned the interruptions by Shahrazad and Dunyazad that reminded readers of the stakes involved in this feat of storytelling. However, when Galland approached the task of integrating tales that were not part of his fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Nights*, Shahrazad and Dunyazad were resurrected to provide legitimacy for the added stories. The last appearance of Shahrazad in Galland's text appears at the end of "The Jealous Sisters" and may be an addition by the publisher rather than by Galland, who died months before the appearance of this volume in 1717. In this last scene, Shahriyar declares his admiration for the extraordinary wisdom and courage of Shahrazad and assures readers that she has accomplished her goals: "[S]he had entertained him, improved his trust in women, and softened his spirit."[42] He therefore renounces his claim on her life and the lives of the other young women of the kingdom. This happy ending was later expanded by other translators who, counting up the nights of storytelling, imagine Shahrazad bearing the sultan three young sons before receiving his grateful pardon. Contemporary readers can choose to imagine their own conclusion to this storytelling odyssey, or they might simply marvel at the remarkable power of the *Nights* to be transformed in the hands of new storytellers.

THE *NIGHTS* AND THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

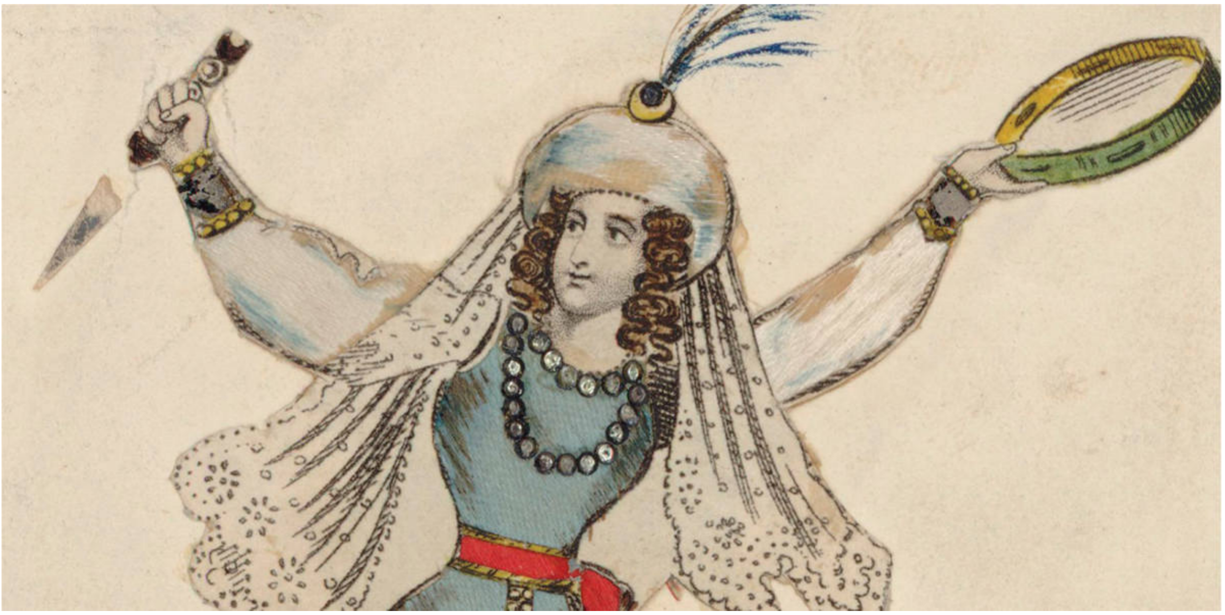
THE FIRST TRANSLATION of *One Thousand and One Nights* into French had a revolutionary impact on European letters. In its wake, Europe was awash in sequels, forgeries, and parodies. Some writers seized upon the "Oriental tale" to liberate themselves from literary constraints, indulging in new modes of fantasy and romance. Jacques Cazotte, for instance, wrote a series of fantastic "Oriental tales" in the mid-eighteenth century and produced a collection of reworked Arabic tales as *Continuation des Mille* *et Une Nuits* in 1788–89.[43] Other writers, including philosophers, appropriated the style of the *Arabian Nights* tales to focus fresh eyes on their own societies and governmental practices. Voltaire claimed to have read Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* fourteen times, and he borrowed storytelling methods and character types as he developed his *contes philosophiques*. His most obvious application of the style of the *Arabian Nights* was in *Zadig, or Destiny* (1747), where he poked fun by having the sultan ask his wives how they could "prefer stories that make no sense and have no point?" Despite such games, *Zadig* was a serious exploration of ideas of free will, despotism, corruption, and hypocrisy in French society—an example of Voltaire's conviction that fable could reveal "what human beings should be."[44]



King Badr is transformed into a bird in "The Story of Julnar of the Sea." John Dickson Batten also illustrated a series of volumes of European fairy tales in his distinctive art nouveau style in the 1890s. From Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights, *ed. E. Dixon (1893).*

The first unauthorized English translations from Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* quickly created a robust readership for the tales. The stories began circulating in both collected volumes and in separate editions stripped of their association with the frame tale. The sequence of discrete stories in the *Arabian Nights* was a perfect match for the new practice of serialization in eighteenth-century periodicals. In 1723, the *London News*, which appeared three times a week, began serializing the *Arabian Nights* in a translation from Galland's text. It appeared in 445 installments over a period of three years, attracting a broad readership.[45] The enthusiastic reception of the *Arabian Nights* in English reveals that the stories were read through many different prisms: as a source of pure narrative pleasure, as a means to deliver didactic lessons, and as an instrument of political critique. The tales inspired Oriental pastiche in the mode of parables and sermons, as well as more subtle disquisitions on the nature of happiness and the fruits of colonialism.[46] The Earl of Shaftesbury may have derided the tales of the *Arabian Nights* as "idle deserts" that would transform the intelligent philosopher into the "silliest woman or merest boy," but others found the collection both entertaining and inspiring. The historian Edward Gibbon claimed that the stories offered both political instruction and pleasure in a "moving picture of human manners and specious miracles."[47]

By the late eighteenth century, the *Arabian Nights* had become a staple of children's reading in England. New editions stripped the tales of objectionable content and added a clear moral to each.[48] English literary historians claim that from Samuel Johnson through Dickens, "hardly a writer of note" failed to "hint at, or mention, somewhere or other the recollected pleasure of reading the *Nights* in childhood."[49] Indeed, by the early nineteenth century, the inspirational presence of the stories of the *Arabian Nights* became in itself a standard literary trope. William Wordsworth's "Prelude" invokes his own experience: "I had a precious treasure at that time,/A little, yellow canvas-cover'd book,/A slender abstract of the Arabian Tales." In *Vanity Fair*, William Thackeray introduces the character of William Dobbin as a boy lying under a tree in the school playground deeply immersed in his "favourite copy of the *Arabian Nights*."[50] In this novel, the *Nights* became associated with imaginative spaces in which a child could forget the oppressive adult world and launch into adventures on the high seas with Sinbad or stumble into the hidden palace of Pari Banu with Prince Ahmad.



The Forty Thieves, *a two-act operatic romance based on the story of Ali Baba, was first performed on April 8, 1806, at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. This illustration detail shows Miss Foote in the role of the clever slave Marjana in an 1808 performance.*

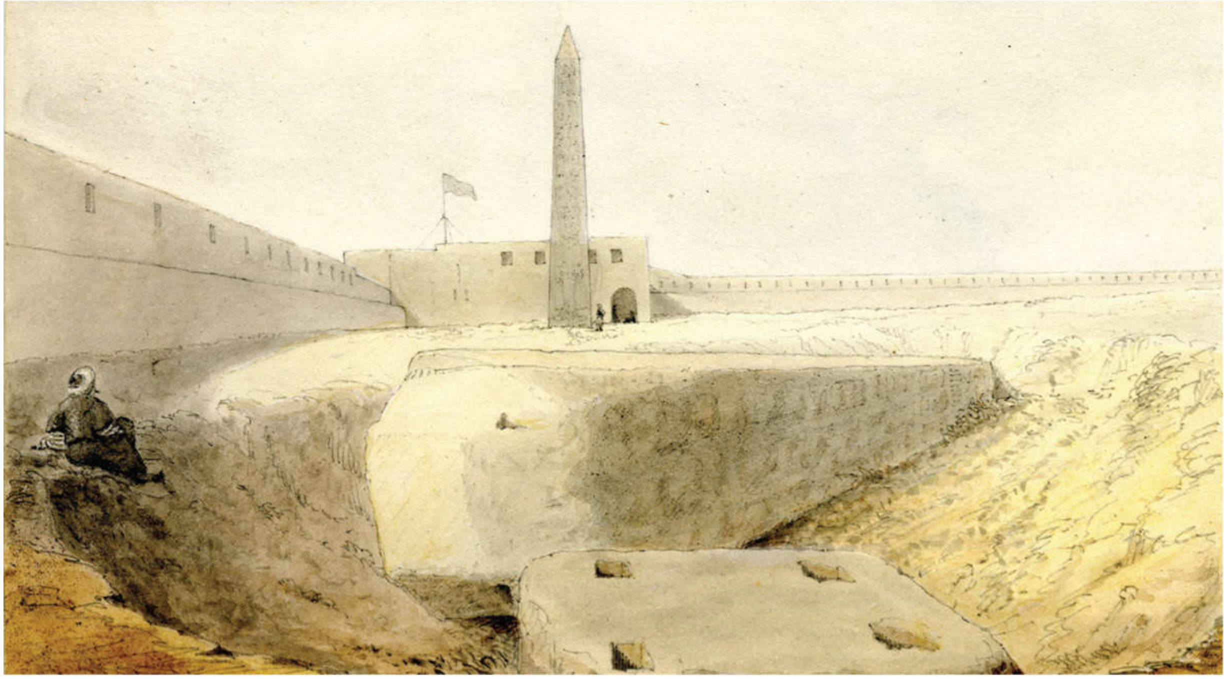
From the early eighteenth century onward, the visual wonders of the *Arabian Nights* were adapted for theatrical performances, panoramas, and other forms of public spectacle. The “fantastic apparatus” of supernatural characters and magical transformations, as well as the fantastic palaces and exotic lands in which the stories were set, made the *Arabian Nights* particularly suitable for adaptation in what were considered less prestigious genres—pantomime, comic opera, melodrama, and romance.[51] *The Sultan*, a theatrical adaptation from 1726, featured flying machines, a magic carpet, and exotic birds. Audiences were attracted to these elements of the fantastic, but beneath the artifice such productions often addressed issues of political oppression or presented appealing myths of social advancement. One heroic play from 1707, *Almyna; or the Arabian Vow*, by Delarivier Manley, critiqued sexist mores and political oppression. Through its brave heroine, it showed the possibility of political reform while still indulging in stereotypes of the “Orient.” Starting in the 1770s, pantomimes increased in number and often commented on slavery and Britain’s colonial empire in the East. However, the pantomimes that continued to enjoy the most popularity were the ones featuring Aladdin or

Ali Baba that highlighted the rise of a character of humble social status, a narrative that acted as a safety valve to release class resentment.[52]

The literary influence of the *Nights* was felt most decisively in the new movement of Romanticism, which famously began (according to Jorge Luis Borges) when someone in Paris or Normandy picked up a copy of Galland’s *Arabian Nights*.[53] Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s childhood infatuation with the *Nights* encapsulates the stimulus it provided to the Romantic imagination:

> One tale … (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings) that I was haunted by spectres, whenever I was in the dark—and I distinctly remember the anxious and fearful eagerness, with which I used to watch the window in which the books lay—& whenever the sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall & bask & read—. My Father found out the effect which these books had produced—and burnt them.[54]

Through reading the *Arabian Nights*, Coleridge, along with the other Romantics, became “a dreamer,” attuned to a vast world that lay beyond the evidence of the senses.[55] In an age that increasingly placed the values of science above the power of imagination, the tales of the *Nights* liberated writers from the constraints of plausibility. As A. S. Byatt explains, for Romantic poets the *Arabian Nights* “stood for the wonderful against the mundane, the imaginative against the prosaically and reductively rational.”[56] The results were evident not only in the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Byron but also in the new genre of the Gothic. *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), credited as the first Gothic novel, was written by a fervent admirer of the *Arabian Nights*, Horace Walpole.



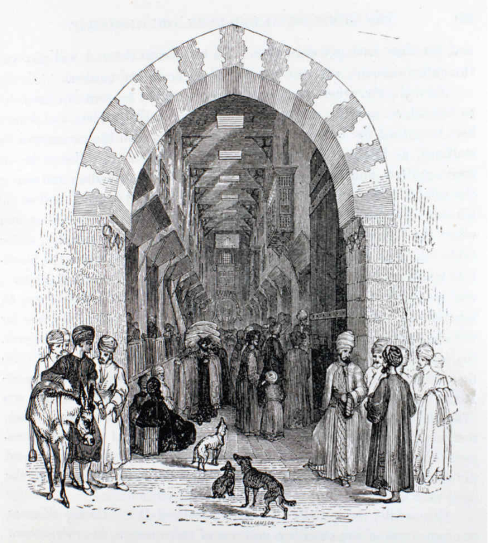
Sketch by Edward Lane. Before he translated The Thousand and One Nights, *Edward Lane was trained as an engraver, and he originally traveled to Egypt in 1825 to document its ancient monuments with the use of a camera lucida. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.*

THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS* IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS* was already deeply embedded in British culture when the first English translations from Arabic were completed. Appearing in the mid-nineteenth century, these new translations were inevitably intertwined with the settings of British imperialism. Henry Torrens's first volume of *The Book of the Thousand and One Nights*, translated from a new Arabic text edited in India by William Macnaghten,[57] was produced in 1838 amid the tensions leading up to the First Anglo-Afghan War, but Torrens abandoned the project after Macnaghten's death in that conflict. Edward Lane's translation, based on the Bulaq edition of the *Nights* assembled in Cairo, was published in 1838–40 as Britain turned its eyes toward interests in the Middle East.[58] Lane's ethnographic approach to his translation was inspired by a genuine interest in the culture of nineteenth-century Egypt (which he imagined resembled that of the medieval *Nights*) and in the tenets of Islam, and his volumes included copious annotations explaining the customs and manners in the stories. Lane's effort to document Arab society in his translation was furthered by the inclusion of dozens of illustrations supervised by William Harvey, one of the Victorian masters of wood engraving. Lane himself ensured that authentic objects, clothing, and architecture would be reflected in the finished product. Lane's notes to the *Nights* gained a new readership as a guide to the Arab world when they were published in a separate volume following the British invasion of Egypt in 1882.

Later in that century, translations of the *Arabian Nights* were entangled with new aesthetic movements and sought to illuminate the poetic or subversive qualities of the story collection. Inspired by his association with Pre-Raphaelite painters and poets, John Payne's translation (1882–84) tried to capture the distinctive spirit of the tales by including all the interpolated poetry, and it avoided adding ethnographic commentary in the manner of Lane.[59] His translation made an impression in literary circles, but, with a circulation of just five hundred copies, it had little impact on a wider readership and was quickly overshadowed by Richard Burton's translation of the Macnaghten text. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885), reflecting Burton's time as both a soldier and a diplomat within the British imperial system, was couched in terms of his own unorthodox imperialism.[60] His preference for an idiosyncratic translation style filled with foreign and archaic vocabulary, and his frank treatment of the stories' sexual content (as well as his extensions of this material in attached notes), gave Burton's translation a transgressive and exotic flavor that suited the Decadent literary spirit of his circle.

Borges suggested that the history of translations of the *Arabian Nights* was an extended masculine rivalry in which each new translator sought to efface his predecessor—an interpretation that privileges the Victorian age of imperialist translation projects.[61] Both Burton and Lane imposed their authority on the story collection through the addition of elaborate academic commentaries, but their work never reached the broad readership of early translations of Galland's French text, such as *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* of Jonathan Scott from 1811. Nineteenth-century editions based on Galland's text would have the added value of illustrations by leading figures of the period. *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* of Thomas and Edward Dalziel, published from 1863 to 1865, for instance, included 842 engraved illustrations by well-known artists, while in France Gustave Doré illustrated the 1865 edition of Galland's classic translation.[62] Both Lane and Burton would find their champions in the twentieth century—including James Joyce, Salman Rushdie, and Orhan Pamuk—but most readers and writers around the world, including Clarice Lispector in Brazil, continued to encounter the *Nights* first in translations from Galland's French edition. In these versions, Shahrazad's frame narrative is typically extended and embroidered.



Engraving by William Harvey for Edward Lane's The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments. *These illustrations by Harvey, a master of woodcut engraving, were the first to systematically ground the tales of the* 1001 Nights *in the unique material culture of Islamic cities.*

While the *Arabian Nights* fed the imaginations of poets and artists with fantastical images of supernatural beings and magical objects, the stories' rich evocation of the cities of medieval Islam helped shape the modern novel. In the eighteenth century, the cobblers, merchants, and tailors who peopled the tales of the *Nights* prompted writers in London and Paris to consider their own cities worthy subjects for fiction. Robert Irwin argues that the *Nights* story cycle of "The Hunchback" was a significant influence on Henry Fielding as he developed the prototype of the English novel.[63] The sheer wealth of quotidian detail that filled the pages of the *Nights* stories trained the eyes and pens of writers to capture the sights, smells, and tastes of their own markets, streets, and homes. In the nineteenth century, authors used the example of the *Nights* to argue for a new realist fiction that was open to social ideas and delighted in elemental human nature. In a book review from 1856, George Eliot noted both the “practical sense” and the “wild imaginativeness” of the *Nights* stories, and she drew on the *Nights* for the intertext of her novel *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Novelists found the imagery of the *Arabian Nights* to be surprisingly adaptable to the new conditions of industrial society. In *Coningsby* (1844), Benjamin Disraeli’s protagonist visits the factories of Manchester to find “chambers vaster than are told of in Arabian fable, and peopled with habitants more wondrous than Afrite or Peri.” Charles Dickens was also entranced by the mixture of the fantastic and the realistic within the *Arabian Nights*, and his writing is rife with references to the stories. As he tried to reveal “the romantic side of familiar things”—to charge the everyday world with the kind of wonder that he found in the tales of the *Nights*—he returned again and again to the inspiration provided by the story collection.

Women asserting their own right to authorship in the nineteenth century found particular inspiration in the storyteller Shahrazad. In responding to Byron’s famous challenge to compose a ghost story in 1816, Mary Shelley incorporated techniques familiar from the *Arabian Nights*. Her *Frankenstein* features a framing device composed of letters written by the Arctic explorer Robert Walton to his sister. Threatened by cold, starvation, and an angry crew, he ends each letter to his Dunyazad with the statement that he will write again if he lives another day, in an echo of Shahrazad’s device. Other allusions to the *Nights* are more direct—most important, the appearance of an “Arabian” woman named Safie (the name of the doorkeeper in some versions of “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad”). Safie, who travels from Turkey to Switzerland in a reenactment of the journey of the *Arabian Nights* from the Middle East to Europe, explains that her mother insisted she cultivate “higher powers of intellect” and “independence of spirit,” in a moment worthy of the narrator of the story collection.[64]

The Brontë siblings (Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne) were deeply invested in the *Arabian Nights* and constructed an imaginary world that drew heavily on the *Nights* in their early stories and poems. The legacy of their creative investment can be seen in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in which Jane takes on the role of the mythical storyteller who ransoms her own life, in this case from "Sultan" Rochester. Exploring Jane's role as author, Brontë makes precise allusions to storytelling techniques from the *Nights* to assert her narrator's authority. By the end of the novel, Jane is able to master Rochester by employing Shahrazad's tactic of delayed gratification: "You shall not get it out of me to-night, sir; you must wait until to-morrow: to leave my tale half-told, will, you know, be a sort of security that I shall appear at your breakfast table to finish it."[65]

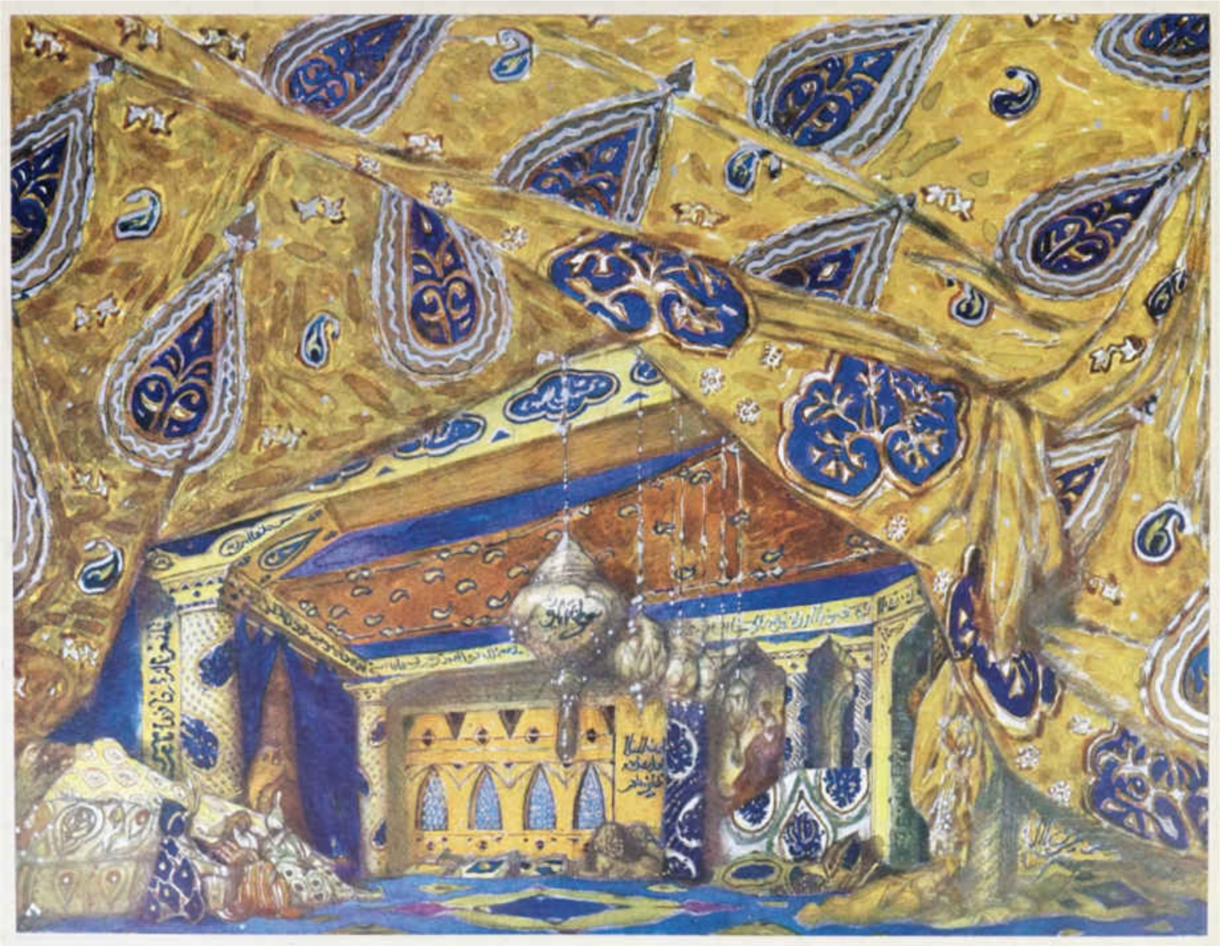
The liberating impact of the *Arabian Nights* was clearly recognizable in new genres steeped in the supernatural, from the poetry of Romanticism to new Gothic tales, from proto–science fiction to the emerging literature of the fantastic—a rich stream of creativity and innovation stretching from Coleridge to Lovecraft. The myths of monsters and jinn and the cartography of mysterious cities in the *Nights* inform literatures of the uncanny from Christina Rossetti to Jorge Luis Borges and provide a critical foundation for such contemporary fantasy writers as Neil Gaiman and S. A. Chakraborty. Beyond the paraphernalia of fantasy or horror, the stories of the *Arabian Nights* affirmed the power of plot for novelists of all stripes. As E. M. Forster put it in his study of the novelist's art:

> Great novelist though [Shahrazad] was—exquisite in her descriptions, tolerant in her judgements, ingenuous in her morality, vivid in her delineations of character, expert in her knowledge of three oriental capitals—it was on none of these gifts that she relied when trying to save her life from her intolerable husband. They were but incidental. She only survived because she managed to keep the king wondering what would happen next.[66]

Even as writers such as Henry James made a claim for interiority as the foundation of the novel, the *Arabian Nights* represented the importance of narrative pleasure and suspense. Shahrazad emerges in fiction driven by plot and event as the ultimate symbol of the virtuosity of the storyteller.

VISUAL DELIGHTS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

BY THE TURN of the twentieth century, the *Nights* had conquered capitals around the world through a brilliant array of adaptations based on the French text. In 1882, the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis lamented that any new volume of the stories had to compete for attention with the dramatic effects of the many theater impresarios and composers who had turned to the *Nights* for inspiration.[67] When a new French translation by J. C. Mardrus appeared, the enthusiastic response came from directors and performers as well as writers. Mardrus's expanded edition of the stories, published between 1899 and 1904, claimed to extend the collection on the basis of a mysterious "Tunisian" text. In fact, Mardrus's version of the tales placed the imaginative and playful above the call to authenticity and gained the story collection a new fin-de-siècle audience.[68] Embraced by writers such as André Gide and Marcel Proust, and quickly translated into English by Edward Powys Mathers, this beautiful, albeit unfaithful, translation generated an interest in the *Nights* that reverberated in the visual and performing arts.



Stage design by Léon Bakst for the Ballets Russes production of Schéhérazade *in 1910. Bakst's exotic set and costume designs for this production had a strong influence on fashion and interior design in the years that followed. Illustration from André Levinson,* Bakst *(New York, 1922).*

The modernist appropriation of the *Arabian Nights* was most powerfully displayed in the Ballets Russes production of *Schéhérazade* in Paris in 1910. Sergei Diaghilev staged the ballet to the music of Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite of the same name, but he dropped the composer's program for the work (which referenced Sinbad's adventures at sea and the mystical dance of the dervishes) in favor of a staging that emphasized the eroticism and violence of the frame tale of Shahriyar. The sets and costumes by Léon Bakst drew from Persian miniatures, the art of Aubrey Beardsley and Gustave Moreau, and ethnic costumes from the Caucasus to create an overwhelming spectacle of vivid color and luxurious fabric. The innovative choreography of Mikhail Fokine and the intensity of Vaslav Nijinsky's performance combined to produce a public sensation first in Paris and then in London and New York. The production turned the *Arabian Nights* into a sensation whose influence was felt in art, fashion, and design. Perhaps the clearest sign of this wider impact was the celebrated fashion show of Paul Poiret in 1911, which packaged the new enthusiasm for Persian-Arabesque design under the title of “The Thousand and Second Night.” In the first decades of the twentieth century, “Oriental” aesthetics were in vogue in the West as never before, and the world of the *Arabian Nights* spread from the stages of avant-garde culture to the advertising posters, fashions, films, furniture, and jewelry of Western capitals.[69]

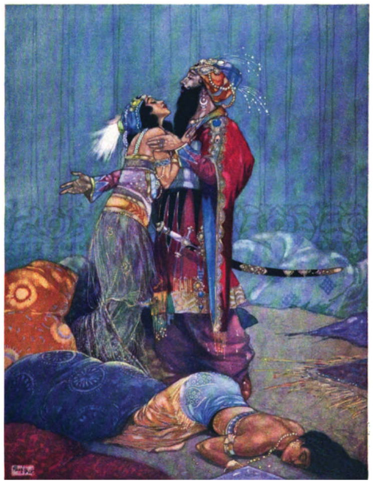


Illustration by René Bull of a scene from the Ballets Russes production of Schéhérazade. *In this adaptation of the frame tale, the sultan’s wife Zobeide is seduced by the Golden Slave (Vaslav Nijinsky), and the ruler condemns all his wives and their lovers to death in retribution. Illustration from A. E. Johnson,* The Russian Ballet *(1913).*

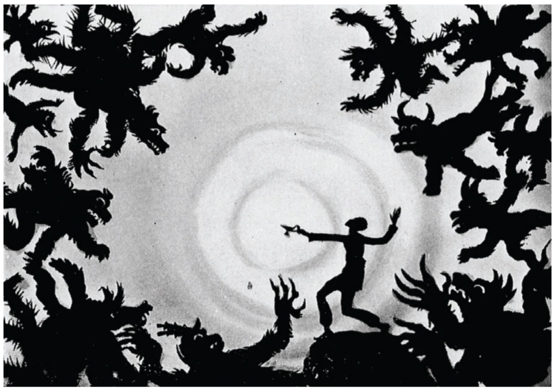
The enthusiasm for the world-building qualities of the *Arabian Nights* was also palpable in Central European literary circles. In 1907, the Austrian poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal inaugurated the new German translation by Felix Paul Greve (based on Burton’s English edition) with an essay lauding the “maze of pleasure” offered by the story collection. Elevating the *Nights* above the work of Homer and Dante, Hofmannsthal praised the enormous social breadth of the tales:

This living world is incomparable and suffused with unending exhilaration, an inextinguishable, passionate, childlike exhilaration that

> intricately weaves everything, brings everything together: the caliph with the poor fisherman, the demon with the huckstress, the most beautiful of the beautiful with the hunchbacked beggar, body with body and soul with soul.[70]

For the Austrian poet, the *Nights* was not simply a fantasy world within which to escape, but an evocation of a realistic environment filled with compelling details: “A never-failing concreteness paints for us the halls, exquisitely paved with flagstones, paints for us the fountains, paints for us the old bandit-mother.” He found in these images both “boundless sensuality” and “poetic spirituality.”[71] A few decades later, another Austrian writer, Joseph Roth, writing in exile after the triumph of Nazism, produced his own *History of the Thousand and Second Night* (1939). But Roth’s vision was suffused by nostalgia for an era of cosmopolitan tolerance that seemed to have been lost forever.

The broad resonance of the *Nights* in the literary and performing arts at the beginning of the twentieth century dovetailed neatly with the needs of the emerging film industry. The stories had long been featured in stage productions, but now a new generation of filmmakers turned to the tales for raw material for their own work. In 1902, Thomas Edison produced a film version of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* that added dancing girls from the Paris Opera. The director of that short film, Ferdinand Zecca, went on to direct a version of *Aladdin or the Marvelous Lamp* in 1906. Meanwhile, the French cinema pioneer George Méliès filmed *Palais des Mille et Une Nuits* in 1905, and German director Ernst Lubitsch drew on the *Nights* for his silent film *Sumurun* (1920), loosely based on the tale of “Nur al-Din.” Featuring Lubitsch as the hunchback, *Sumurun* borrowed the staging of the popular pantomime of Friedrich Freksa and featured seductive dancing by Pola Negri, perhaps as a nod to Marjana in the tale of Ali Baba.



Aladdin with the magic lamp from The Adventures of Prince Achmed *(1926). The story of Aladdin is one of a series of* Nights *tales that German animator Lotte Reiniger wove together to produce her groundbreaking film. The power of the lamp was called on to defeat the dangerous demons of Wak-Wak in order to save Prince Achmed's beloved Pari Banu.*

From the start, the fantastical elements of the tales sparked the inventiveness of filmmakers who were exploring the capabilities of the new medium. Méliès's film adapted the basic plot of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp" and used a series of innovative special effects, including stop-motion animation and superimposition. In Zecca's *Aladdin*, trick photography allowed servants to appear and disappear at Aladdin's request and buildings to be transformed around the characters. These magical effects were taken to new heights by the German filmmaker Lotte Reiniger in *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), the first surviving feature-length animated film. Using her distinctive animation style based on silhouette figures, Reiniger created a series of linked episodes drawn from "Prince Ahmad," "Aladdin," "The Enchanted Horse," and other *Nights* tales. Cutting out each silhouette and laboriously animating them in a Berlin studio, Reiniger created fantastical locations complete with arabesque ornaments and a full range of princes, fairies, witches, and demons, echoing the shadow plays of Cairo and Istanbul coffeehouses. Her own influence can be seen in the animated silhouette sequence of "The Tale of the Three Brothers" in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 1* (2010).

Early live-action German films drawing on the *Arabian Nights* combined fantasy with Expressionism in creating otherworldly environments through lighting, architecture, costumes, music, and choreography. Paul Leni's *Waxworks* (*Das Wachsfigurenkabinett*, 1921) drew on the familiar motif of Caliph Harun al-Rashid in disguise (as well as Ivan the Terrible and Jack the Ripper) to comment upon the art of filmmaking as a mode of distraction. Fritz Lang's *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, 1921) employed a frame tale that featured the character of Death, as well as three interpolated stories of romantic tragedy set in a generalized Orient, including a first act featuring a doomed romance with a Persian princess. If Shahrazad was able to use stories to evade death in *One Thousand and One Nights*, the characters in Lang's film suffer from the pessimism of early Weimar Germany and are helpless to escape their fate.[72] The elaborate production design for *Destiny* utilized authentic Middle Eastern artifacts and costumes from a Hamburg museum, and the film's flying-carpet scene so impressed Hollywood star Douglas Fairbanks that he snapped up the American rights to the film.

The Thief of Bagdad (1924), produced by and starring Fairbanks, is credited as the first Middle Eastern adventure fantasy made by an American studio. The film melds the stories of "Prince Ahmad" and "Aladdin" with motifs from "Ali Baba" to create a quest narrative in which the prize is the hand of a beautiful princess. Director Raoul Walsh created a dreamlike Baghdad with sets in a German Expressionist mode and interiors combining Orientalist cliché and Art Nouveau design. The set designs for the film, created by William Cameron Menzies, betray the inspiration of Victorian illustrators of the *Arabian Nights*, as well as the brilliantly colored versions of Persian miniatures produced by Edmund Dulac. The influence of the Ballets Russes *Schéhérazade* production is also palpable—in both the costumes and the physicality of Fairbanks. In the film, the character of Prince Ahmad is changed into a charming street rogue in an effort to create a figure with whom Western audiences could identify, and the film delivers the simple moral that "Happiness must be earned"—a distinctly American interpretation of *Nights* stories that usually unfold according to the more unpredictable prompts of destiny.[73] The film's final image of the flying carpet, an image stolen from Lang's *Destiny*, would largely define both the story of "Aladdin" and the world of the *Arabian Nights* as seen through the Orientalist lens of Western filmmakers.

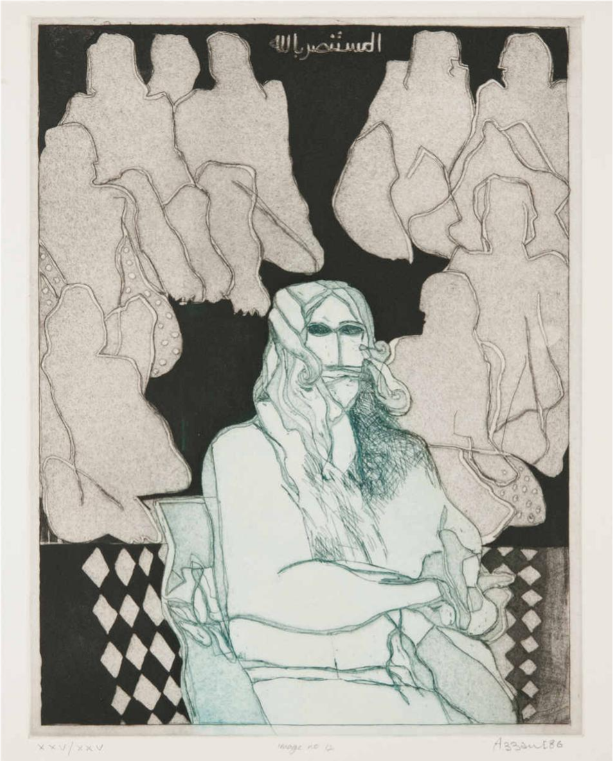
Publicity photograph for The Thief of Bagdad *(1924), directed by Raoul Walsh and featuring Douglas Fairbanks Jr. in the lead role.*

The pattern set by *The Thief of Bagdad* would be followed closely by other directors of *Arabian Nights* films, which tended to stress adventure and special effects. The 1940 remake of *The Thief of Bagdad*, produced by Alexander Korda, presents the boy Sabu as the true hero and draws from the repertoire of its predecessor to tell a story about a weak sultan, an evil vizier, and a hero's destiny. Disney's animated *Aladdin* (1992) and its live-action remake (2019) use the same model, featuring a protagonist who possesses a streetwise charm and resourcefulness quite at odds with the laziness of the teenager that we encounter at the beginning of the *Arabian Nights* tale.

The other key *Arabian Nights* character who sparked a film franchise was Sinbad, who was similarly transformed by Hollywood into a more conventional heroic type to create swashbuckling adventures featuring the pioneering special effects of Ray Harryhausen. The Sinbad of the *Nights* is a merchant seeking opportunities for trade and meeting with disaster on every voyage, but the new cinematic Sinbad who debuted in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) is a sword-fighting hero on a quest—a premise that resonated with a Western tradition of storytelling and attracted mass audiences for big-budget film extravaganzas. The plot of this film, as well as its two sequels, was largely an excuse to introduce extraordinary animated monsters into exotic locations rather than to maintain fidelity to any notion of the Middle East.[74] Together these films created a popular Orientalism that Robert Irwin suggests was remarkably innocent of real-world politics—“a place of fertility, wonder and delight, a place of beautiful women, wise men and great treasures that may be won by the adventurous.”[75]

MODERN AND POSTMODERN *NIGHTS*

AS THE STORIES of the *Arabian Nights* were transformed through the new medium of film, writers continued to take inspiration from its spirals of story. Both modernists and postmodernists shared a fascination with the storytelling techniques of Shahrazad—particularly the practice of embedding stories within other stories—and a delight in the interplay between a frame and its embedded tales: outer and inner narration, the narrator and the narrated. Jorge Luis Borges, entranced by the philosophical mazes he found in the universe of the *Nights*, played with similar puzzles in his own fiction. In Borges’s story “The Garden of Forking Paths,” the character Albert meditates on the possibility of infinite narratives as he remembers “that night which is in the middle of the *Thousand and One Nights* when Scheherazade (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the Thousand and One Nights.”[76] Borges’s rewriting of “The City of Labtayt” in “The Chamber of Statues” becomes an exploration of the nature of fate, a reading that prefigures the more recent use of the *Arabian Nights* in Ted Chiang’s “The Merchant and the Alchemist’s Gate.”[77]



The Story of the Barber, *print by Dia al-Azzawi, 1986. Printed with the permission of the artist.*

Like Borges, the poet Fernando Pessoa was fascinated by the formal intricacies of the *Nights*. Musing in *The Book of Disquiet* on the power of novelistic characters to acquire a presence stronger than that of friends or acquaintances in the real, visible world, Pessoa asked "if everything in this whole world is an embedded series of dreams and novels, like boxes within boxes, one within another, and then in yet another, everything being a story of stories, like *The Thousand and One Nights*, unfolding false in the eternal night."[78] The notebooks of James Joyce reveal the same interest in the formal possibilities presented by framing and interlinked narratives in the *Nights*, and his work is peppered with allusions to the story collection. Joyce was attracted by the linguistic virtuosity of Burton's edition of the stories, and he took seriously Burton's belief that the Arabs and the Irish shared a penchant for poetry and supernaturalism. If Burton replicated imperial hierarchies in this comparison, Joyce answers with a positive reclamation of the shared histories embodied in the *Nights*, especially in the tales of wanderers like Sinbad and Harun al-Rashid.

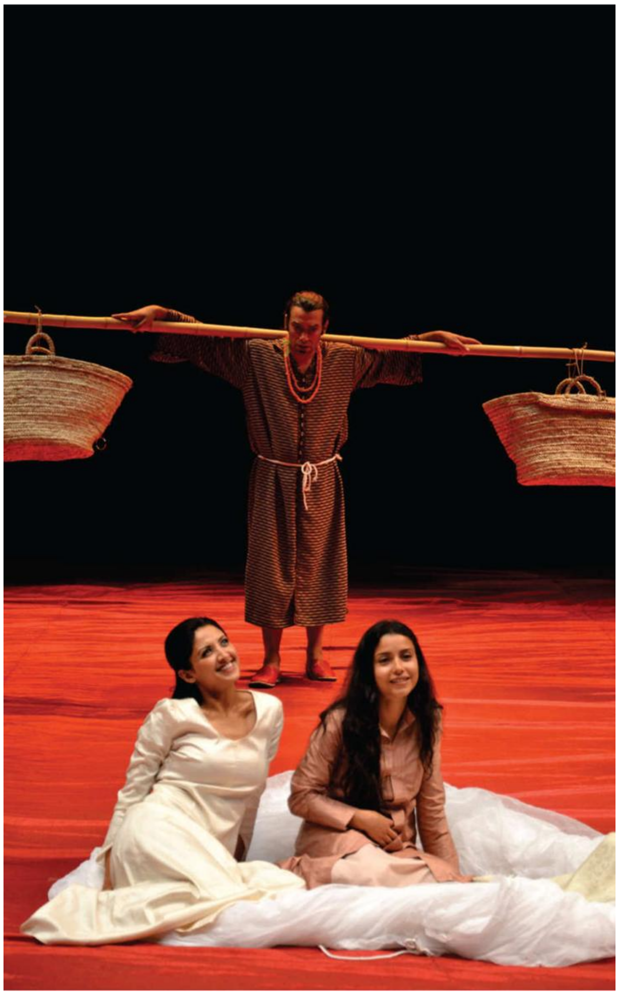
The frame structure of the *Nights* was a continuing inspiration for the formal experiments of writers such as the American novelist John Barth. In his fiction, Barth plays a series of literary games in which framed stories can intersect with one another and an author can insert himself in the narrative as a time-traveling genie. In the 1960s, Barth championed these aesthetic innovations in opposition to a literature of social commitment, and several decades later he was still drawing on the stories of the *Nights* to explore the permutations of identity in *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor* (1991).[79] The association between the *Nights* and the joys of experimenting with form was even recognized beyond the literary field in Cold War America. When American physicist Richard Feynman became frustrated with his own research, he reoriented himself through the pleasure he gained from reading the *Arabian Nights*. He asserted that his decision to "play" with physics in the style of the stories opened a path to the discoveries that earned him a Nobel Prize in 1965.[80]

Arab writers who turned to the *Nights* for inspiration in the same era had little interest in the philosophical games that preoccupied Borges or Barth, according to critic Ferial Ghazoul.[81] Instead, poets, dramatists, and novelists invoked the *Nights* to make allusions to political issues and illustrate the abuses of absolute power. The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz returned to the original Arabic tales to create works that weave together myth and reality and deliver a potent statement on contemporary politics. His novel *Arabian Nights and Days* (1979), which includes twelve framed stories, ultimately exposes the social disorder that results from injustice and corrupt political rule. In *Gate of the Sun* (1998), the Lebanese writer Elias Khoury adopts the narrative devices of the *Nights* to create an account of the plight of Palestinians. In an epic story rooted in the details of ordinary life, he assembles a multitude of voices in linked and embedded tales that intertwine the histories of Lebanon and Palestine.

Filmmakers beyond the American studio system, such as the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini, also returned to the *Nights* in this period to explore the formal possibilities offered by the story collection. Pasolini's *The Flower of the One Thousand and One Nights* (*Il fiore delle mille e una notte*, released in 1974) adopted the story-within-a-story structure of the *Nights* but used the tale of Zumurrud and her beloved Nur-e-Din for the frame. Rooting his retelling in authentic settings and the everyday life of the people, he filmed on location in Eritrea, Yemen, and Nepal, using local casts. His “people’s *Nights*,” with its frank embrace of the sexuality that is true to the original stories, served as a useful corrective to the fantasies of Hollywood—a reminder that many artists and audiences associate the *Arabian Nights* with adult realities and not merely fairy tales of classic heroes and spectacular riches.

The imperial legacies embedded in translations of the *Nights* have presented post-imperial writers with particular challenges and opportunities. In both *Shame* (1983) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Salman Rushdie uses an image of a boy discovering a copy of Burton’s *Arabian Nights* in the library of a family patriarch to symbolize the inheritance of a cosmopolitan culture in Bombay.[82] Rushdie’s turn to the *Nights* for solace after the 1989 fatwa declared against him for the perceived blasphemy of *The Satanic Verses* resulted in the beloved children’s tale *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), which, like Shahrazad’s tales, asserts the power of storytelling against tyranny. Less well known is Rushdie’s attempt during this same period to edit his own version of the *Arabian Nights*, an effort thwarted only by persistent obstacles to reissuing his preferred translation.

Another writer who has drawn upon the hybrid cultural legacies of the *Arabian Nights* is Orhan Pamuk. The Turkish Nobel laureate confessed that the French tales of Antoine Galland had had little attraction for him as a young reader, for they bore little resemblance to his own childhood in Istanbul. The Turkish version of the Arabic core that Pamuk encountered in his early twenties was also foreign to his sensibility, and it was only when he read Burton’s commentary on the story collection that he was finally inspired to return to the tales. In this encounter, Pamuk found a space in which classic *Nights* motifs could be woven into new stories about a distinctly cosmopolitan Istanbul.[83] Pamuk’s novel *The Black Book* (1990) employs the motif of the nocturnal urban wanderer Harun al-Rashid and the doubles that appear in stories such as “The Sleeper and the Waker” to critique authoritarian rule in Turkey in the 1980s. His narrator also muses on the mystery of the addition of “Aladdin” to the *Arabian Nights* by a certain “Youhenna Diab.”[84]



Shahrazad begins "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad." Tim Supple's stage adaptation of Alf Layla wa-Layla/One Thousand and One Nights, *Dash Arts/Luminato Festival, Toronto, and Edinburgh International Festival. Houda Echouafni, Hajar Graigaa, and Ramzi Choukair in performance at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Photo by Sophie Austin.*

Puppet used to represent both Marjana and Shahrazad, created by Katkatha Puppet Arts for a performance of 1001 Arabian Nights *at the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières, France (September 2021). This production was inspired by recent women's protests in New Delhi. Courtesy of Anurupa Roy, Katkatha Studio, New Delhi.*

The *Arabian Nights* can be interpreted as a feminist tale as well as an affirmation of the power of storytelling to counter tyranny. "Though it appears to be a story against women," A. S. Byatt writes in her essay "Narrate or Die," "it actually marks the creation of one of the strongest and cleverest heroines in world literature."[85] Following in the footsteps of Shahrazad, Lebanese author Hanan al-Shaykh collaborated with director Tim Supple in 2011 to produce a theater adaptation that restores the erotic intensity and violent urgency of the tales. Al-Shaykh's *One Thousand and One Nights: A Retelling* (2013) dramatizes the many echoes of the essential battle of wills between Shahrazad and Shahriyar. Other writers have also returned to the tale of Shahrazad to continue her story in a way that speaks to their contemporary concerns. In *When Dreams Travel* (1999), the Indian novelist Githa Hariharan draws readers back into the story of the two sisters who challenged a sultan, but she shifts the focus from the violent misogyny of Shahriyar to Dunyazad's determination to investigate the circumstances of her sister's death and assert her own power as a storyteller. The influence of Shahrazad also permeates Alia

Yunis’s *The Night Counter* (2010), an interlocking series of stories that relate the lives of three generations of Lebanese-American women. Yunis is clear about the debt she owes to the storyteller of the *Arabian Nights*, whom she claims as “a feminist centuries before the word became part of Western society.” For Yunis, Shahrazad is nothing less than a superhero, “one who doesn’t need to kill anyone to reveal her strength.”[86]

Twenty-first-century translations of the *Arabian Nights* inevitably reflect the essential predicaments of their own age. If nineteenth-century translators saw themselves as capturing the essential character of the Orient for readers in the imperial center, translators today are recovering a multiplicity of voices buried inside a collection that was shaped by many storytellers and many historical moments. In a telling contrast with Edward Lane, who followed up his *Nights* translation with intensive work on an Arabic dictionary—only to have the text enlisted in the cause of the British occupation of Egypt—the contemporary Danish translator of the *Arabian Nights*, Ellen Wulff, saw her contributions to an Arabic dictionary reissued in 2015 as part of a welcome package for Syrian refugees in Denmark.[87] New stage adaptations of the story follow a similar pattern. In Mahmoud al-Hurani’s play *1001 Titanics*, performed in Lebanese refugee camps by the Arab Puppet Theatre in 2015, Shahrazad tells the tale of a young refugee who flees his rocket-bombarded village for an unnamed Arab metropolis, only to take to the sea in a precarious journey to safety. There is no simple ending to the story. As one of the performers, a twenty-one-year-old refugee, explains, “Sometimes, to escape death, they choose death itself.”[88]

In the pages of the *Arabian Nights*, Shahrazad continues to tell her ever-more-astonishing tales to entertain the sultan, yet the pleasures of these stories are not idle or escapist but instead essential for survival—her own and that of the other women of her kingdom. Centuries after her invention, she still reminds us of the power of stories to affirm the lives of the oppressed, the displaced, and the vulnerable. The open-ended frame of the *Arabian Nights* seems to invite us to add new stories to the marvelous tales we already know well—to withstand the threats before us and demand the chance to be heard again and again. Behind these many narratives lies the hope that stories might change minds and futures. In

Naguib Mahfouz's retelling of the *Thousand and One Nights*, Shahriyar admits that Shahrazad's stories are "white magic," for "they open up worlds that invite reflection."[89] The history of the story collection demonstrates the potential for such reflections to reverberate in unexpected ways in ever-new contexts, and it is with this hope that this book has been forged.

THE ANNOTATED *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

THIS ANNOTATED EDITION of the *Arabian Nights*, which welcomes "Aladdin" back into the fold of the collection, is the fruit of a long quest to understand the origins of that tale. The *Arabian Nights* has always spoken to my earliest memories of storytelling and the mysteries of my family heritage. The tales occupied a special place in my mother's heart as the first book given to her by her adoptive father in Belém in northern Brazil, and, as children, my sisters and I would imagine wondrous new adventures for Aladdin, Marjana, and Ali Baba. My family had lived in the Middle East before I was born. Alongside the Persian carpets and ceramic platters that were legacies of those days, the tales of the *Arabian Nights* were a rare constant in an otherwise itinerant existence.

When I began to research the stories as a graduate student, I made a pilgrimage to Paris to see the diary of Antoine Galland and examine for myself the record of the mythical Syrian storyteller who had first crafted the stories of Aladdin, Ali Baba, Prince Ahmad, and Pari Banu. Years later, after I had relocated to the Middle East, I was lucky enough to be among the first to learn of the rediscovery of Hanna Diyab's *Book of Travels*, the memoir that at last brought the storyteller from Aleppo out from the shadows of literary history. As I spent time uncovering the traces of his life and talent in the stories inserted into the *Arabian Nights* by Galland, I was also searching for my own Middle Eastern roots—in a genealogy of Sephardic Jews whose lives in the wider Mediterranean, from Aleppo to Europe, mirrored the geography of Diyab's early life.

Diyab's *Book of Travels*, with its use of devices reminiscent of *One Thousand and One Nights* and his account of giving tales to Galland, reminds us that neither these new tales nor their teller were figments of the French translator’s imagination. More important, the Diyab stories, when read with a new understanding of their hybrid authorship, reveal multiple debts to the Arabic tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights* and the narrative traditions from which they came, as Robert Irwin explores in the “Afterword” to this volume. As a mixture of cultures and narrative traditions, these stories have their own complex “authenticity.” My task with this volume, then, was to bring together the most influential Arabic tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights* as well as the tales added by Diyab through Galland’s French translation—because only such a selection would offer the reader, whether new to the tales or already an expert, the chance to read them meaningfully in relation to one another.

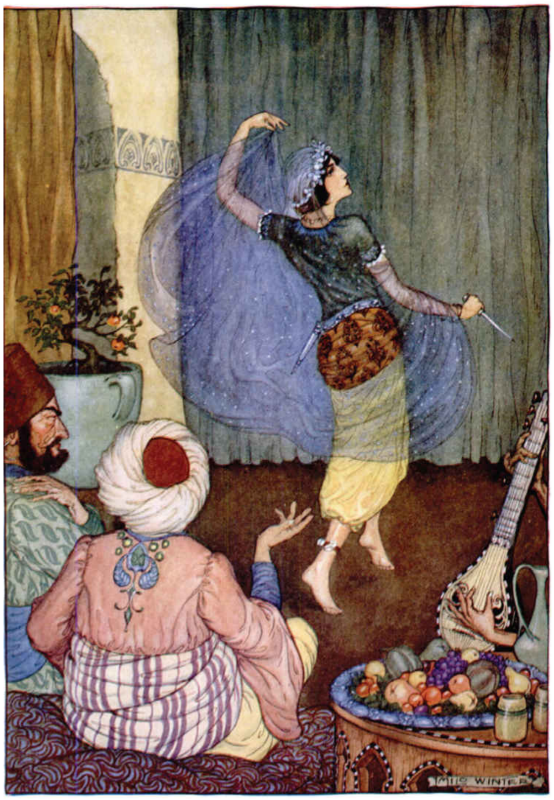
The first part of this volume consists of most of the seminal story cycles in the stable Arabic core of the collection: “King Shahriyar and His Vizier’s Daughter, Shahrazad,” “The Merchant and the Jinni,” “The Fisherman and the Jinni,” “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” and “The Three Apples.”

The opening frame tale of King Shahriyar and Shahrazad remains one of the most important parables of the power of literature, and it forms the impetus for telling other tales that pit women against men or feature extreme passions and threats of violence. In the first story cycle told by Shahrazad, “The Merchant and the Jinni,” the stories of three old men are exchanged for the life of a merchant who has inadvertently killed the son of a powerful jinni. A vengeful jinni is also outwitted by an ingenious storyteller in Shahrazad’s next story, “The Fisherman and the Jinni.” In the first part of this tale, a poor fisherman prevails against the brutal threats of the jinni in an apparent echo of Shahrazad’s mission, but then the story shifts into the darker “Tale of the Enchanted Prince.” This second tale evokes a fantasy realm governed by unchecked desire and disturbing violence that does not serve Shahrazad’s purposes so neatly—unless her intention is to enter (and sympathetically engage) the disturbed psyche of her king and interlocutor, Shahriyar (as Marina Warner has suggested).

The nightmare of the enchanted prince of the Black Isles gives way to perhaps the best representation of the dream space created by nocturnal storytelling, “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.” In this story, a strange cast of characters—including a lowly porter, three one-eyed dervishes, and a caliph in disguise—are drawn into the mysterious household of three women who have forged a secret life within the teeming city of Baghdad. The sexual riddles and transgressive play of the women with the porter barely prepare the audience for the tales that follow, where every forbidden door is opened and every taboo is broken as lovers carry out doomed affairs in underground passageways and magicians battle jinn through magical transformations. The caliph will upend the unique domestic order of the women by commanding them to reveal their stories and marrying them off at the end of the tale, but in the next story—“The Three Apples”—the authority of the caliph will be shaken by the discovery of the mutilated body of a young woman. In this prototype of a detective story, the caliph’s vizier Jaafar is charged with finding those responsible for the murder within three days, or be hanged for his incompetence.

“The Three Apples” may be read as an example of the many crime stories that appear in *One Thousand and One Nights*, and it is supplemented in this volume by “Dalila the Crafty,” a story that is not part of the original core of the *Nights* but is typical of the rogue or trickster tales that were particular favorites of Cairo listeners. Dalila’s audacious tricks, which become more extravagant as she targets the social elites of Baghdad, were always crowd-pleasers, and, although she is relatively unknown to Western readers, Dalila rules the airwaves in popular serials broadcast across the Arab world during Ramadan. The story of Dalila and her equally devious daughter, Zaynab, also broadens the range of female characters present in this collection—providing a small but representative glimpse of the many clever and determined female protagonists who are sometimes forgotten amid popular images of dancing slave girls.

The last Arabic story cycle in the first part of this volume is familiar to many fans of the *Nights*. “The Story of Sinbad the Sailor” represents the fertile engagement with merchant lore and travel literature in Arabic narrative and dramatizes the constant tension between the pleasures of home and the strange dangers of the realms that lie beyond the sea. These voyages offered fertile storytelling fodder for a multitude of Hollywood swashbuckling adventures, but on the page they reveal the ingenuity and resilience of the merchant protagonist more than his physical prowess.



In her final dance, Marjana drew the dagger. Illustration from "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" by American illustrator Milo Winter, from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1914).*

A novel feature of this volume is the inclusion alongside this Arabic core—for the first time in contemporary translations—of all the tales added by the French translator from Diyab's storytelling: "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," "The Enchanted Horse," "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid," "Ali Khawaja, Merchant of Baghdad," and "The Jealous Sisters." The recovery of Diyab as an author in his own right through the publication of *The Book of Travels* provides sufficient justification to read Diyab's tales alongside the original Arabic core, which represents the narrative culture from which the Syrian storyteller emerged. First and foremost, the goal is to present the full range of Diyab's storytelling. Arrayed on these pages are all the marvels and adventures, as well as the many protagonists that reveal the young storyteller's empathy for the underdog and the outsider—most famously, the characters of Aladdin the poor tailor's son and Marjana the brilliant slave. It is remarkable that history has preserved in Galland's Parisian diary a record of the oral performance of these tales by their first known storyteller, and these notes are also included in Part III of this volume to offer a tantalizing glimpse into the creative process through which these tales arrived.

Diyab's tales of "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba" live on in the popular imagination as classic rags-to-riches stories in which good fortune comes in the form of magic—the invocation of a jinni's power through a ring and a lamp in the case of Aladdin, and the magic password to an amazing treasure trove in the case of the poor woodcutter Ali Baba. The coming-of-age fairy tale of "Aladdin" fulfills popular expectations of supernatural adventures as the young protagonist acquires unimaginable riches, orders the construction of a magnificent palace overnight, and manages to woo a princess who will prove an invaluable ally against the schemes of jealous magicians. The second act of "Ali Baba," however, takes a different turn as it develops into an urban crime story in which Marjana takes the lead in outwitting a band of thieves. Galland's notes from Diyab's original performance of the story indicate that Marjana was originally the chief protagonist of this tale, and the real suspense lies in watching her find new ways to outsmart the robbers who threaten her master and her own future. Diyab's interest in these kinds of crime stories is also evident in "Ali Khawaja, Merchant of Baghdad," where an exemplary episode of detection outshines that offered by the caliph's vizier in "The Three Apples." After a merchant steals a sum entrusted to the care of another merchant, a few neighborhood boys give a lesson to the caliph in how to ascertain the truth of the crime and deliver justice.

In the stories he offered Galland, Hanna Diyab reveals himself to be an artful adapter of tales that exemplify the values of the merchants that he knew so well from his youth in Aleppo. In the story cycle "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid," Baghdad serves as the stage for the everyday struggles of craftsmen and merchants as well as the enigmatic backdrop for the disturbing mysteries the caliph stumbles upon as he wanders the streets of his capital. These strange encounters—the vicious whipping of a mare and the masochistic pleadings of a blind beggar—seem to play on the settings and events in "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," and the meaning of each is laid out for the caliph in a repetition of that story's conclusion. If the Arabic tale of "The Porter and the Three Women" boasted gruesome images of carbonized and dismembered lovers and eerie visions of petrified cities, we know from Galland's notes that the Syrian was not shy about delving into similar territory. Diyab's cycle of "Night Adventures" preserves one of the pearls of horror that helps explain the appeal of the story collection to masters of the genre from H. P. Lovecraft to Guillermo del Toro, the tale of the too-perfect wife who barely picks at a grain of rice at dinner and then turns out to be a magician who feasts on human flesh in the company of ghouls.

Even when the logic of the fairy tale dominates, as it does in "The Enchanted Horse," "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," and "The Story of the Jealous Sisters," the tales added in French via Diyab emphasize the wit and ingenuity of their protagonists, often women. In a telling detail preserved from Galland's notes of Diyab's storytelling, Princess Parizade in "The Jealous Sisters" receives the same education as her brothers, so it should not surprise when she succeeds in a quest that had defeated them. The impetus in all three of these fairy tales lies in a competition for rare or marvelous artifacts—the talking bird, the flying horse, the healing apple, and, most famously, the magic carpet—and the emphasis remains on the skill of the protagonist in navigating all the obstacles and dangers. In these tales, Marjana is joined as a formidable female protagonist by Parizade from "The Jealous Sisters," the Bengali Princess from "The Enchanted Horse," and the fairy Pari Banu from "Prince Ahmad."

The varied tales that unfold within the pages of the *Nights* are ultimately held together by the objective of astonishing and engaging their readers. Each might be imagined as a story spun out by Shahrazad as she seeks to hold the attention of King Shahriyar and therefore ensure that she lives to see another day and tell another tale. As an acknowledgement of the importance of Shahrazad's voice in shaping this story collection, we have included the periodic interruptions in which Shahrazad interacts with her sister and dangles the promise of ever more marvelous tales. Identified by a sketch of Shahrazad and the symbol of a nightingale (the work of Dia al-Azzawi), these insertions point readers to the murmured words in the margin—which provide the impetus for one more night of storytelling. When Galland added the tales of Hanna Diyab to his *Arabian Nights*, he suggested the continued presence of Shahrazad by inserting additional interruptions, and I have followed suit in Part II of this volume by including such reminders of the storyteller’s voice behind the tales.

In supplementing these stories with illustrations, an editor of the *Arabian Nights* has a multitude of riches to draw on. My own approach was to provide a cross section of illustrations from the many translations of the story collection while seeking out additional images from the lands in which the tales were born. While early Arabic manuscripts of the *One Thousand and One Nights* were not illustrated, there are Persian translations that draw on the rich tradition of miniatures in that culture, and examples of these illustrations are included, along with several examples from an Urdu translation of the *Nights*. Beyond these, I have included works of contemporary artists like Dia al-Azzawi and Laleh Khorramian that speak to these tales, as well as images of objects from the British Museum that link the tales to their original context.

Illustrations drawn from Western translations of the *Nights* reflect the changing conventions and technologies of book illustration. They include early woodcuts that sometimes situate the tales in European settings, as well as prints produced by masters of wood engraving like William Harvey, who Lane prompted to make the first efforts to accurately depict the material culture of Arab lands. Illustrations based on Albert Letchford’s oil paintings and Edmund Dulac’s watercolors are represented, as well as a wide array of line drawings from H. J. Ford, Helen Stratton, J. D. Batten, Joseph Benwell Clark, and William Strang. These images mingle with colored lithographs that evoke an exotic world of rich palaces and supernatural creatures, as well as the simpler, and occasionally moralistic, drawings for children’s editions of the *Nights*. American illustrators like Maxfield Parrish, Milo Winter, and Eric Pape make an appearance, alongside the Russian graphic artist Nikolai Ushin, the Hungarian illustrator Willy Pogany, and the German impressionist artist Max Slevogt. The work of Pre-Raphaelite artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti is also featured. Other illustrations acknowledge the rich life of these stories on stages and screens throughout the world: the popular musical adaptations in England, the famous Ballets Russes production in Paris, and a recent bilingual stage version using Arab actors created by director Tim Supple and writer Hanan al-Shaikh. Film versions of the tales of the *Arabian Nights* are familiar to many readers, so I have chosen to feature a less known retelling of the stories—*The Adventures of Prince Achmed* by German director Lotte Reiniger.

THE SEALE TRANSLATION

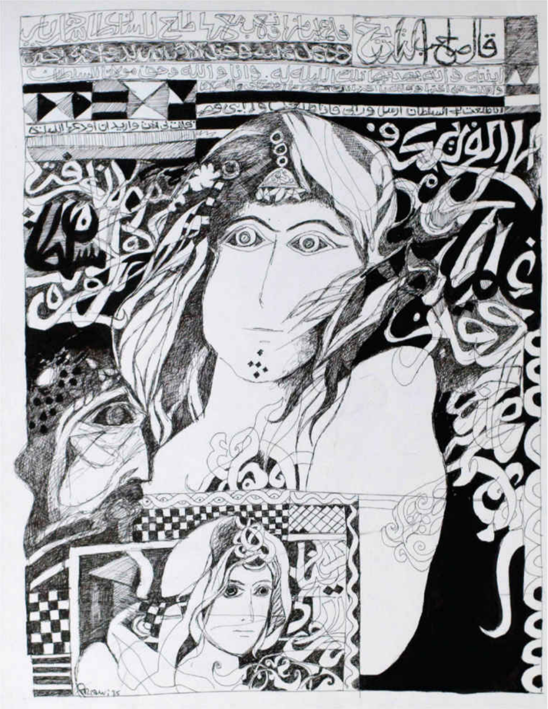
THE RESOLVE in this edition to recover the sheer pleasure of storytelling within both the Arabic core of the *Nights* and the French additions of Diyab and Galland led to my commissioning of a new translation by the poet Yasmine Seale. No contemporary English translation offers the full roster of tales from Diyab or the same array of distinctive female characters.[90] The famous Victorian versions of the *Arabian Nights* that purported to fulfill these prerequisites—the editions of John Payne and Richard Burton—are crafted with conscious archaism and do little to capture the provocative leaps of Diyab's storytelling. In truth, old versions simply do not survive the scrutiny of a new generation of readers, and the contemporary editions still leave room for a new version of the tales characterized by the rare expressiveness of the translator.

Historically, English translations of the *Nights* have been beholden to the Romantic conviction that the story collection embodied the life and customs of the Arabs and, under the guise of authenticity, shaped the story collection to serve this purpose. Among Victorian translators, there was an underlying perception of the *Nights* as the domain of the explorer, adventurer, and anthropologist, and its content was treated as evidence of particular Islamic virtues or as heroic tales to be rendered with appropriately masculine vigor.[91] Despite the fact that the sprawling Arabic story collection contains numerous formidable female characters, Victorian translators routinely cut or undercut tales featuring women or female narrators. Edward Lane relegated the cycle of the "Wiles of Women" to his notes, and Richard Burton, peddling an "unexpurgated" version of the *Nights* to private subscribers, reduced female agency to sex. Both Burton and Payne privileged the figures of Caliph Harun al-Rashid and his vizier Jaafar as the key protagonists of the Arabic story collection at the expense of Shahrazad and other women in the tales.[92]

Even more problematic was Burton's one-sided identification with a mythical Arabia, which was accompanied by an antagonistic attitude toward its perceived enemies and cultural "others." He was followed on this path by French translator J. C. Mardrus, and, as a result, the two historical translations most widely available online and in lovingly illustrated reprints not only accentuate but elaborate upon instances of prejudice against Jews, Zoroastrians, and sub-Saharan Africans. Burton and Mardrus are sometimes remembered for being ahead of their time in their acceptance of homosexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the racism in their additions to the *Nights* was regressive, even judged by the standards of their own time.[93] Let the curious reader beware: The kind of extrapolations added by Burton and Mardrus, who peddled their own prejudices to heighten the exoticism of their versions of the stories, are irredeemable.

The boldness of diction and style in translations by Burton has often been admired as a pioneering effort to capture the true foreignness of the source culture of the text.[94] Yet Burton's seemingly revolutionary gestures —preserving alliteration, assonance, and rhyming prose, and interposing archaisms and foreign words in a medievalism reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites—masked his blatant borrowings from his precursors.[95] Every time I encounter a reviewer who, bored by the flatness of a modern version of the *Nights*, harks back to the flair and alleged authenticity of Burton, I am further convinced of the need for a new translation to deliver a final knockout blow to the racist and Orientalist phantasmagoria of Burton and Mardrus.

Husain Haddawy's translation from 1990, based on the Arabic text edited by Muhsin Mahdi, broke with this tradition, but it was grounded in another brand of cultural essentialism. Haddawy's *One Thousand and One Nights* is widely admired for its fidelity, but it is reliant on a text edited with the conviction that the story collection should be purified of any later additions, both in Arabic and in French. The unintended consequence of relying on a single manuscript with only 282 nights of storytelling is the absence of the strong female characters that Marina Warner has complained are missing from most available versions of the *Nights*.[96] Given the widespread adoption of Haddawy's edition in the classroom, these prove unfortunate omissions, as the frame's promise that women may have the opportunity of answering or disproving the accusations of men against them is unfulfilled in the absence of tales in which they get the chance to do so. Readers of Malcolm and Ursula Lyons's versions are better served, but their edition omits all but two of the tales added in French from Diyab's storytelling, since it was published before the rediscovery of Diyab's *Book of Travels* brought attention to the Syrian storyteller as an author in his own right. Even with regard to the original Arabic core, there remains room for a richer and more vivid contemporary translation in the manner of the recent French translation by Jamel Eddine Bencheikh and André Miquel.[97]



The exhausted vizier offers King Shahriyar his daughter. Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi, 1985; printed with the permission of the artist.

This new Liveright/Norton edition of Yasmine Seale's original translations offers to readers a faithful yet more expressive version of the most important stories from both Arabic and French. Readers will find versions of the tales that are distinctly contemporary, finally stripped of deliberate exoticism and the project of literary archaeology. A poet and translator from both French and Arabic, Yasmine Seale represents the perfect match between translator and text. She brings to the *Nights* her Oxford training in medieval Arabic literature as well as a commitment to translating contemporary Arabic drama and poetry, and her interests speak to the present moment of migration within and from the Arab world. If English translations of *One Thousand and One Nights* were often animated by the conviction that the golden age of Arabic culture and literature lay in the remote past, here is a writer excited about its present and future.

In a review of contemporary translations of the *Nights*, the Arabist Bruce Fudge captures well the challenge presented to contemporary translators by the plot-driven tales of the Arabic manuscripts. The plainness of the Middle Arabic diction is complemented by the relatively straightforward architecture of each sentence. As Fudge puts it, “The treasures and pleasures of the *Nights* do not reside in the quality of its language.”[98] Despite the myths surrounding the story collection—most notably in the work of Jorge Luis Borges—the reader of a tale drawn from *One Thousand and One Nights* should not be lost in a labyrinth of prose. Suspense is provided by the internal logic of the tale—by the simple question, “What will happen next?” The contemporary translator, faced with this source text, may well fear she will produce syntax that feels colorless, or prose that feels repetitive as names and events recur in a lengthy cycle of tale-telling.

The original language of the Arabic tales of the *Nights* thus lies far from the heightened exoticism of the panoramas and pantomimes that brought the world of the “Orient” to Western stages. This simplicity proved to be a virtue, as the stories achieved massive popularity in anonymous translations from the French or chapbook retellings set in Paris or London. Yet for Victorian translators who sought to make a name for themselves, it represented a stubborn obstacle to their ambitions. I was fascinated to discover direct and readable drafts of translations buried in the papers of both Lane and Burton in the collections at Oxford and the Huntington Library. However, both translators ultimately sought out a more distinctive style for their published work that might set their accomplishments apart. While Lane opted for the authoritative voice of the King James Bible in his *Nights* translation, Burton dipped into his reservoir of linguistic virtuosity to deliver literary pyrotechnics. The twenty-first-century translator no longer need operate with these assumptions and aspirations. The tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* are no longer considered rudimentary folktales that must be transformed into world literature by the affectations of the European-trained scholar.

The choices available to a contemporary translator of the Arabic stories of the *Nights* are well represented in the recent translations of Lyons into English and Bencheikh and Miquel into French. Given the plain syntax of the original, much of the translators' scope for action lies at the level of pace and tempo as they make decisions on how to deal with the cascade of names and events and the challenge of repetition. Malcolm Lyons acknowledged that he chose to speed up his text, understanding that he would sacrifice some of the distinctive qualities of a source that relies on repetition as well as rhyming prose and assonance. The result may seem a bit thin. Sped up, and missing the rhyme and echo of the Arabic, a certain allusiveness is lost. In contrast, Fudge argues, Bencheikh and Miquel lean into the expansive, repetitive rhythm of the original, opting to flesh out and lend weight to its expressiveness.[99]

Seale brings a rare instinct to these challenges—seeking to capture a sense of the rhyming prose of the original Arabic as well as the distinctive cadence of the storyteller behind the tale. She embraces the rhythm of an iambic meter in English as she spins out the story—carried forth in the deceptive simplicity of her style, which leans heavily on monosyllables that often tread lightly toward a single held syllable. As the mystery of "The Three Apples" is set in motion, Seale carefully builds suspense as the caliph makes an offer for a fisherman's catch: "Together they went to the Tigris. He cast his net and waited, and when he drew the rope and hauled it up, he found inside the net a heavy chest, locked." Rhythm and subtle sound effects—alliteration, half-rhyme, assonance—are deployed to capture the musicality of the original Arabic text as the chest is opened: "When they broke it open, they found inside a basket of red wool, and inside the basket was a stretch of carpet and, beneath it, a shawl folded in four, and, beneath it, a young woman like pure silver, killed and cut in pieces." Seale's choices seem natural and yet, on second reading, they are never conventional or cliché. The description of the woman as "pure silver" captures some of the strangeness of the original Arabic for the reader—drawing on metaphors for beauty elsewhere in the story collection. Without indulging in artificial effects, Seale's language draws the reader into the tension and horror of this moment.

As she translated the Arabic tales, Seale might have imagined Shahrazad at the beginning of her storytelling marathon, embarking on what she could only have hoped would be a feat of resilience rather than of speed. Faced with such a venture, Shahrazad needed to marshal her confidence and carefully draw out her tales in that spiraling structure of stories-within-stories that is characteristic of the *Nights*. Any acceleration in her pace might betray her mortal fear and condemn her to failure. Rather than speeding through the action, Seale has the patience to linger and draw out the intrigue in the moment. The opening scene of "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," which introduces the buyer in the midst of a busy marketplace, exemplifies Seale's approach as she immerses the reader in the bewildering range of edible delights. Beginning with recognizable pastries, she continues on to coin names for more outlandish concoctions—drawing the reader from the realistic to the fabulous in an echo of the progression of the story as a whole. As the story develops, Seale deliberately seeks to evoke the dream state that permeates the house of the three women as the tale ventures into the darker, more fabulous tales of each character. In this setting, some details remain undefined—for instance, the "couches spread with blue"—leaving room for the play of imagination on the part of the reader. Readers surely will agree that Seale captures the perfect rhythm and mood for the strange and wonderful tale.

Throughout her translation, Seale avoids domesticating her prose into something akin to paraphrase. Her choices tend to enhance the ambiguity or irony of the moment rather than resolving the language into the commonplace. When the character is told, "You have only a little to live," the sound effects carry the meaning and the reader is left to fill in the blanks. When the keeper stands "bared" before the guest in "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," the word carries more than just the suggestion of nakedness. Seale ultimately brings a poet's sensibility to these tales and draws on the resonances of language within a deep field of references. In "The Jealous Sisters," the word "throng" thus resonates within a web of meaning that stretches into the poetry of Wordsworth and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Other poets have tackled the task of translating the *Nights* with the aim of capturing the unique sounds and rhythms of the Arabic text, but their work seems decidedly dated to a contemporary reader. John Payne, who (like Henry Torrens before him) believed that the interpolated poetry was essential to the spirit of the *Nights*, grounded his translation in the style of Pre-Raphaelite poets such as Rossetti. In contrast, Lane simply refused to tackle the poetry, and Burton seems to have adopted Payne's versions in order to raise their archaic qualities to new levels with his own multilingual fluency. Not surprisingly, given Seale's experience translating contemporary Arabic poetry and her remarkable versions of the thirteenth-century poet Ibn Arabi, the embedded poetry is one of the great strengths of this new translation.[100] Readers will not find all the interpolated poetry here, but verse is included where it seems crucial to plot or character or theme. In these new versions of the Arabic stories, the poetry claims its place in language that speaks to the modern reader. Eschewing any impulse to burden this verse with the excessively exotic or archaic qualities that have been typical of other translators, Seale allows the vitality and beauty of these pieces to shine forth again. In this volume, the poetry that has defeated so many of the translators of the past proves to be central to Seale's achievement.

In translating the tales of Diyab and Galland from French, Seale had another set of challenges before her. Following her intention to recover the voice of Shahrazad within the story collection, the goal here was to unearth the oral quality of storytelling from beneath the courtly cadence of Galland's writing. The source material was decidedly different from the Arabic tales. Unlike the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, with their simple syntax and unpretentious language, the Diyab stories were extended by Galland as he sought to fill out the imaginative plots with scholarly detail and conventional characterization. Galland lends his prose the solemn rhythm of court ceremony, delighting in stretching out scenes that were likely brisker in Diyab's telling—and even going so far as to have couples who find love at first sight draw out their courtship according to the finer nuances of Versailles etiquette. Taking advantage of the positioning of the stories as part of Shahrazad's marathon of tale-telling, Seale asked what it might mean to take seriously the gambit that these tales are told by a woman fearing for her life. Beneath Galland's cadence, Seale found it productive to imagine a quicker pace and a more desperate urgency.

Rhythm remains central to Seale's translation of the Diyab stories, but in these, she pushes the tempo rather than lingering on the details—perhaps drawing the reader just a little closer to the original experience of Diyab's storytelling performance in 1709. At the same time, Seale continues to craft the soundscape that defines this new version of the *Nights*. When Ali Baba encounters the forty thieves for the first time, they are "tall, tough, and armed." As he watched, "They unbridled their horses, tied them to trees, and fed them from sacks of barley they had brought on their backs." The mixture of meter, alliteration, and rhyme echoes the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights* in the first part of the collection and carries the same insistent narrator's voice into new realms of storytelling. This translation, which draws the added stories of Diyab closer to the Arabic narrative tradition within which they are rooted, reveals the vital force that survives within the simple act of storytelling and brings Shahrazad's voice to new generations of readers.

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1 This story collection has gone by many names as it has circulated in different languages and cultures. For convenience, I refer to the Arabic story collection as *One Thousand and One Nights*, and to the European versions as the *Arabian Nights* (the common English title) or *Les mille et une nuits* (the common French title).

2 A. S. Byatt, "Narrate or Die," *New York Times Magazine* (April 18, 1999), p. 104.

3 Research on the Indian influences on the story collection is summarized in Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004), p. 372.

4 Marzolph and van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 657.

5 Nabia Abbott, "A Ninth-Century Fragment of the 'Thousand Nights': New Light on the Early History of the *Arabian Nights*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8, no. 3 (1949): 133.

6 S. D. Goitein, "The Oldest Documentary Evidence for the Title *Alf Laila wa-Laila*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 78, no. 4 (1958): 301–2.

7 All but one of these stories are included in Part I, Stories from Arabic.

8 Quotation from Francesco Gabrieli, trans. Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Storytelling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights* (Brill, 1963), pp. 3–4.

9 Aboubakr Chraïbi, *Arabic Manuscripts of the* Thousand and One Nights (Paris: espaces&signes, 2016).

10 Chraïbi, *Arabic Manuscripts*.

11 The counting was done by Josef Horovitz. See Marzolph and van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 679.

12 Husain Haddawy, trans., *The Arabian Nights* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 3.

13 Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Tauris, 2004), pp. 4–5.

14 Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 121.

15 Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 109.

16 Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794), vol. 1, p. 90.

17 See Hasan El-Shamy, "Oral Traditional Tales and the *Thousand Nights and a Night*: The Demographic Factor," in *The Telling of Stories: Approaches to a Traditional Craft*, ed. Morten Nøjgaard (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press), pp. 63–117.

18 Russell and Russell, *The Natural History*, 1: 148–49

19 Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of* The Thousand and One Nights (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 2.

20 Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 131.

21 This plot development can be found in "The Tale of Aladdin of the Beautiful Moles."

22 The best guide to the use of magic and the role of jinn in the *Nights* appears in Edward William Lane's notes to his translation of the story collection. See, in particular, Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, ed. Edward Stanley Poole (London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1865), vol. 1, pp. 26–33, note 21, on Jinn; pp. 58–62, note 15, on Magic.

23 Karla Mallette, "Reading Backward: The *1001 Nights* and Philological Practice," in *A Sea of Languages*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Karla Mallette (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 100–1 16.

24 The influence could also have come through an analogous story in *One Hundred and One Nights*. See Paulo Lemos Horta, "Tales of Dreaming Men: Shakespeare, 'The Old Hunchback,' and 'The Sleeper and the Waker,'"*Journal of World Literature* 2 (2017): 276–96.

25 Mohamed Abdel-Halim, *Antoine Galland: Sa Vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1964).

26 Antoine Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, ed. Jean-Paul Servamin (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), vol. 1, p. 22.

27 This first English translation from Galland’s French text is reprinted in Robert L. Mack, ed., *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

28 Janine Miquel-Ravenel, *Antoine Galland: Inventeur des “Mille et une nuits”* (Paris: Geuthner, 2009); Raymond Schwab, *L’auteur des “mille et une nuits”: Vie d’Antoine Galland* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2004); Jean-Paul Sermain, *Les mille et une nuits entre Orient et Occident* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2009).

29 The story of “Sinbad the Sailor” did not appear in Galland’s Syrian manuscript of *One Thousand and One Nights*, but it can be found in a seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkish manuscript of the *Nights* and Arabic editions from the nineteenth century.

30 To satisfy the demand for new “stories from the Orient,” Pétis de la Croix had turned to a Turkish manuscript of tales to produce *The Thousand and One Days*, which had a frame tale similar to that of the *Thousand and One Nights* as well as some overlapping stories. See Ulrich Marzolph, *Relief after Hardship: The Ottoman Turkish Model for The Thousand and One Days* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017).

31 The reference to the first meeting between Diyab and Galland is in *Le Journal d’Antoine Galland (1646–1715): la période parisienne*, ed. Frédéric Bauden and Richard Waller (Paris: Peeters, 2011), vol. 1, p. 290. On Diyab and Galland, see Paulo Lemos Horta, *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 17–21.

32 An English translation of Diyab’s memoir has now been published. See Hanna Diyab, *The Book of Travels*, 2 vols., trans. Elias Muhanna (New York: NYU Press, 2021). Ulrich Marzolph explores Diyab as an author through the tales that Galland did not inegrate into the *Nights* in “Hanna-Diya-b’s Unpublished Tales: The Storyteller as an Artist in His Own Right,” in *Antoine Galland (1646–1715) et son Journal*, edited by F. Bauden and R. Waller (Louvain, 2019), pp. 75–92.

33 Aboubakr Chraïbi, “Galland’s ‘Ali Baba’ and Other Arabic Versions,” *Marvels & Tales* 18, no. 2 (2004): 159–69.

34 Ruth Bottigheimer, “East Meets West: Hannā Diyāb and *The Thousand and One Nights*,” *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 28 (2014): 302–24.

35 It is noteworthy that Galland’s journal contains no notes from a telling of the story of “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp.” Galland’s notes from the other stories are included here in Part III—Hanna Diyab’s Tales.

36 Jean-Paul Sermain, *Les mille et une nuits entre Orient et Occident* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2009), pp. 89–92.

37 For the relationship of Lucas and Diyab, see Horta, *Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 55–87.

38 Paulo Lemos Horta, “Afterword” in Hanna Diyab, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2.

39 See “The City of Gold” in “Hanna Diyab Tales” (Part III) in this volume.

40 Horta, *Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 44–54.

41 Ulrich Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales and Their Impact on Western Oral Tradition* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).

42 Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. iii, p. 373.

43 Hundreds of fictions in an “Oriental” mode were published in eighteenth-century France. See Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 241.

44 On Voltaire, see Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London: Vintage, 2012), p. 273.

45 Peter Caracciolo, *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988), pp. 1–6.

46 Joseph Addison’s “The Vision of Mirza” (*The Spectator*, Sept. 1, 1711) used Oriental settings to offer an allegory of Paradise, while Samuel Johnson followed in the footsteps of Voltaire to produce *The History of Rasselas* (1759), a tale of a futile search for happiness that quietly questioned British colonialism.

47 Georges Bonnard, ed., *Edward Gibbon: Memoirs of My Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1966), p. 36.

48 Mack, “Introduction,” *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, p. xviii.

49 Brian Alderson, “Scheherazade in the Nursery,” in Caracciolo, ed., *Arabian Nights in English Literature*, p. 82.

50 William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 50–51.

51 Bridget Orr, “Galland, Georgian Theatre, and the Creation of Popular Orientalism,” in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 103–4.

52 Orr, “Galland, Georgian Theatre,” pp. 109–11, 123–26.

53 Jorge Luis Borges, “The Translators of the Thousand and One Nights,” *Selected Non-Fictions*, trans. Suzanne Jill Levine et al. (Viking, 1999).

54 *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs. 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956–71), vol. 1, pp. 347–48.

55 Coleridge, *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 354.

56 Byatt, “Narrate or Die.”

57 Henry Whitelock Torrens, trans., *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (Calcutta, 1838).

58 Edward William Lane, trans., *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, 3 vols. (London: C. Knight, 1838–40).

59 John Payne, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, 9 vols. (London: The Villon Society for private circulation, 1882–84), 9 vols.

60 Richard Francis Burton, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 10 vols. (London: Printed by the Burton Club for private subscribers, 1885). The tales of Diyab were published in Richard Francis Burton, *Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night with Notes Anthropological and Explanatory*, 6 vols. (London: Printed by the Burton Club for private subscribers, 1886–88).

61 Borges, "Translators."

62 The visual universe of the *Arabian Nights* was defined by these nineteenth-century illustrators, and they would have a lasting influence on the films and graphic novels of the *Nights* in the twentieth century. See Robert Irwin, *Visions of the Jinn: Illustrators of the Arabian Nights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kazue Kobayashi, "The Evolution of the Arabian Nights Illustrations: An Art Historical Review," in *The Arabian Nights and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, ed. Yuriko Yamanaka and Tetsuo Nishio (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 171–93.

63 Robert Irwin, "The *Arabian Nights* and the Origins of the Western Novel," in *Scheherazade's Children: Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*, ed. Philip Kennedy and Marina Warner (New York: New York University Press, 2013), pp. 143–53.

64 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 99.

65 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Ware, UK: Wordsworth, 1987), pp. 491–92.

66 E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1962), p. 45.

67 Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, *Obras Completas de Machado de Assis*, vol. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1994).

68 J. C. Mardrus, *Les mille nuits et une nuit*, 16 vols. (Paris: Éditions de la Revue Blanche, 1899–1904); Dominique Julien, *Les Amoureux de Schéhérazade: Variations modernes sur les Mille et une nuits* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 2008), chap. 2.

69 Julien, *Les Amoureux*; Peter Madsen, Introduction to *Tusind og én Nat*, trans. Ellen Wulff (Copenhagen: Forlaget Vandkunsten, 2013).

70 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "A Thousand and One Nights," in *The Arabian Nights*, ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 385–86.

71 Hofmannsthal, pp. 382, 384.

72 Donald Haase, "The Arabian Nights, Visual Culture, and Early German Cinema," in *The Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Ulrich Marzolph (Detroit: Wayne State

University Press, 2007), pp. 245–60.

73 Robert Irwin, “*A Thousand and One Nights* at the Movies,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 7, no. 2 (2004): 223–33.

74 The two sequels were *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1973) and *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977).

75 Irwin, “*A Thousand and One Nights* at the Movies,” p. 232.

76 Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths,” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 1998), p. 125.

77 Ted Chiang, “The Merchant and the Alchemist’s Gate,” in *Exhalation* (New York: Picador, 2019), pp. 3–36.

78 Pessoa published *Livro do Desassossego* under the name Bernardo Soares, one of several heteronyms he used in his work. (Translation from Portuguese is mine.)

79 John Barth, *Chimera* (New York: Random House, 1972); John Barth, “The Literature of Exhaustion,” in *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 62–76.

80 Richard P. Feynman, “*Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman!”: Adventures of a Curious Character* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985).

81 Ferial J. Ghazoul, *Nocturnal Poetics:* The Arabian Nights *in Comparative Context* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), p. 135.

82 Paulo Lemos Horta, “Cosmopolitan Bias: Salman Rushdie Reads Richard Burton,” *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1.1. (2014): 89–106.

83 Orhan Pamuk, “To Read or Not to Read: The Thousand and One Nights,” in Pamuk, *Other Colors: Essays and a Story*, trans. Maureen Freely (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); personal communications.

84 Orhan Pamuk, *The Black Book*, trans. Güneli Gün (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994).

85 Byatt, “Narrate or Die,” p. 104.

86 Alia Yunis, “Afterword: My Arabian Superheroine,” in *Scheherazade’s Children: Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*, ed. Philip Kennedy and Marina Warner (New York: NYU Press, 2013), pp. 398–400.

87 See “Contemporary Translators,” Part IV.

88 Khaled Soubeih, “Le drame des réfugiés raconté sur les planches,” *La Presse* [Montreal], Sept. 22, 2015.

89 Naguib Mahfouz, *Arabian Nights and Days*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (New York: Anchor, 1995), p. 2.

90 In 2008, Ursula Lyons contributed excellent versions of “Aladdin” and “Ali Baba” to Malcolm Lyons’s translation of the Arabic tales, but she did not translate the other Diyab tales. The absence of “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu” and “The Enchanted Horse”—tales that have had a lasting influence on cinematic visions of the *Arabian Nights*—is particularly unfortunate. See Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons, trans., *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*, 3 vols. (London: Penguin, 2008).

91 Fawn Brodie makes the connection between masculinity and translation clear in her classic biography of Burton. See Brodie, *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

92 Horta, *Marvellous Thieves*: pp. 175–216 on Lane and women in the *Nights*; pp. 284–90 on Burton and Harun al-Rashid.

93 Paulo Lemos Horta, “Cosmopolitan Prejudice,” in *Cosmopolitanisms*, ed. Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta (New York: NYU Press, 2017), pp. 153–68.

94 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

95 Horta, *Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 217–54.

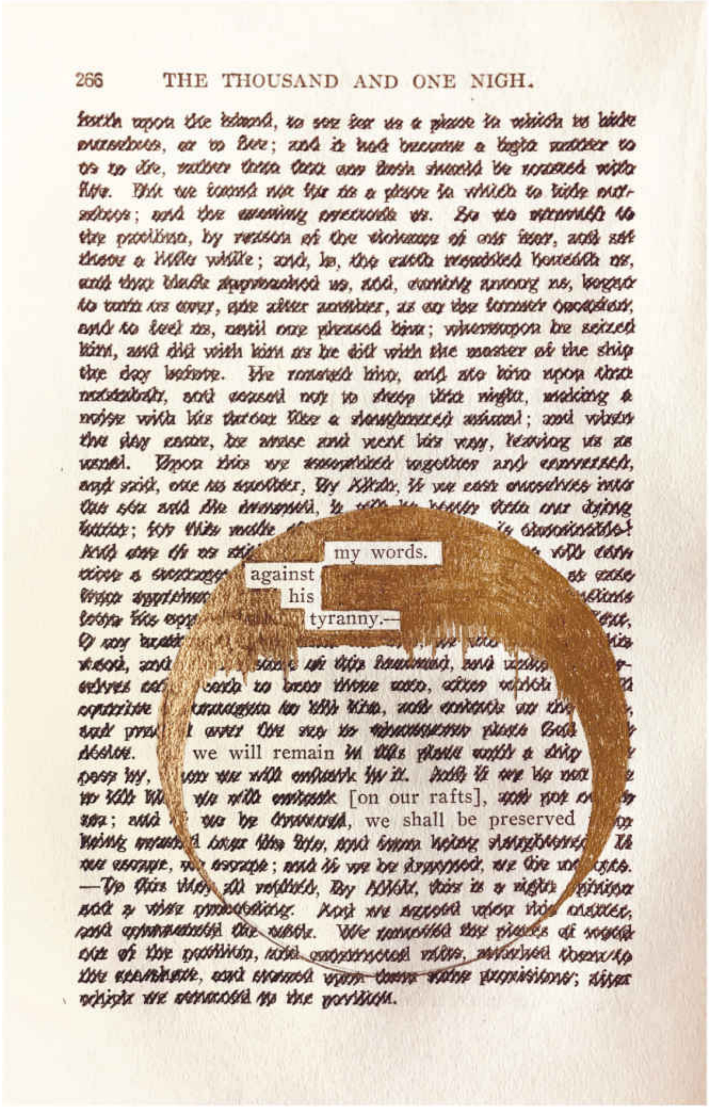
96 Marina Warner, Foreword, in Ibn al-Sa’i, *Consorts of the Caliphs: Women and the Court of Baghdad* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), pp. xi–xiv.

97 Jamel Eddine Bencheikh and André Miquel, trans., *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 2005–2006).

98 Bruce Fudge, “More Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136, no. 1 (2016): 134–46. Quotation on p. 140.

99 Fudge, “More Translators,” p. 141.

100 Yasmine Seale and Robin Moger, *Agitated Air: Poems after Ibn Arabi* (London: Tenement, 2021).

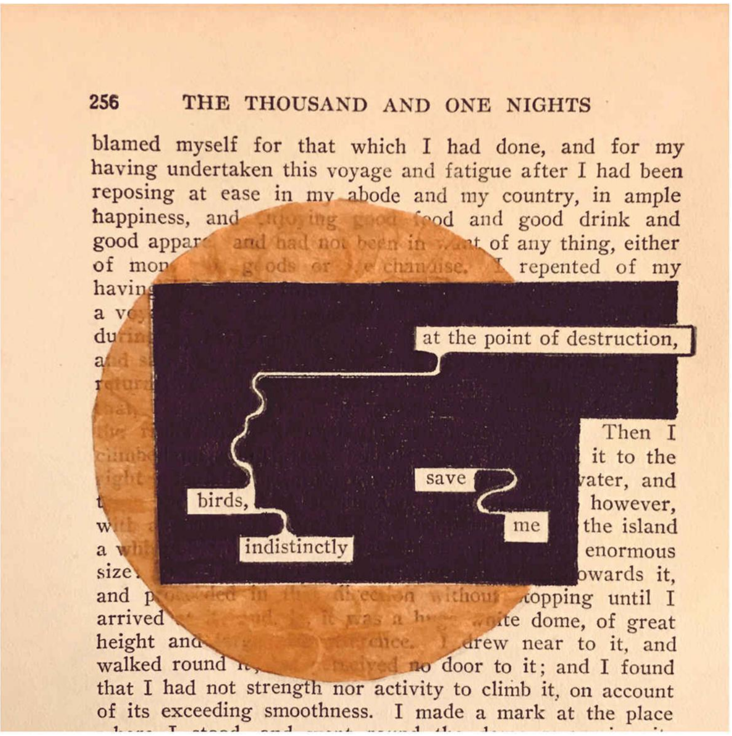


266 THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGH.

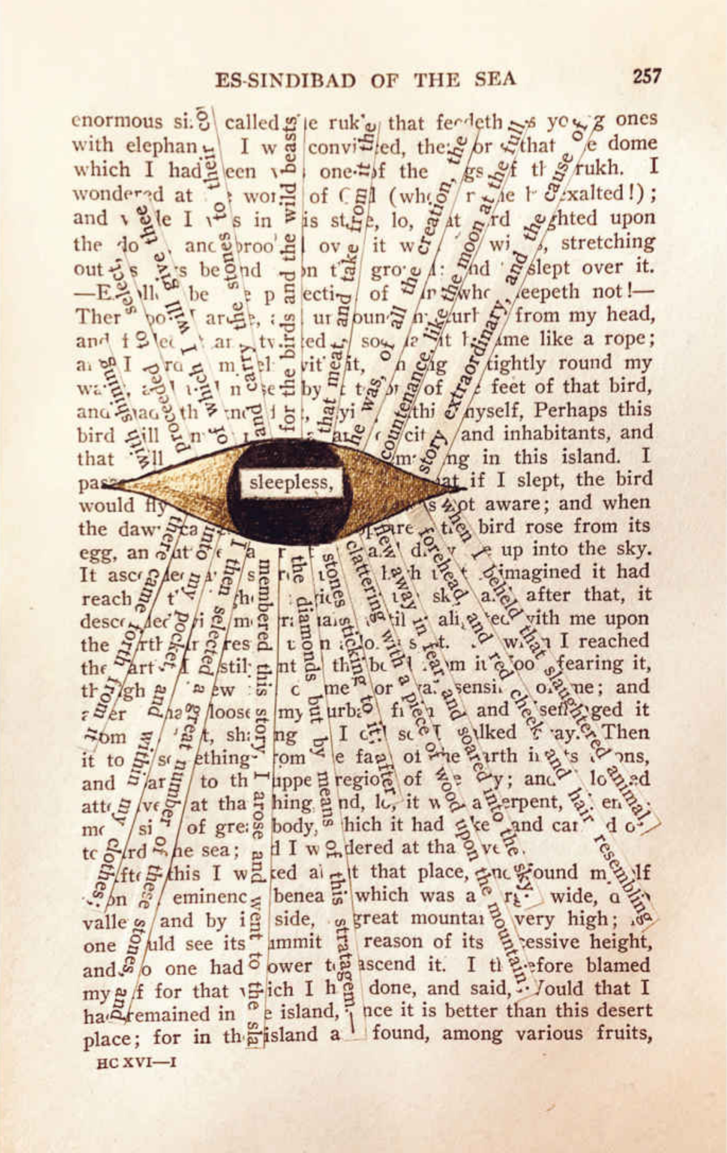
my words.
against
his
tyranny.—

we will remain
[on our rafts],
we shall be preserved

These images are part of a series of visual poems by Yasmine Seale, based on Edward Lane's version of the Nights. *They were produced in 2020 alongside Seale's work on a new translation. They might be understood as gestures of both homage and dissent toward her predecessor.*

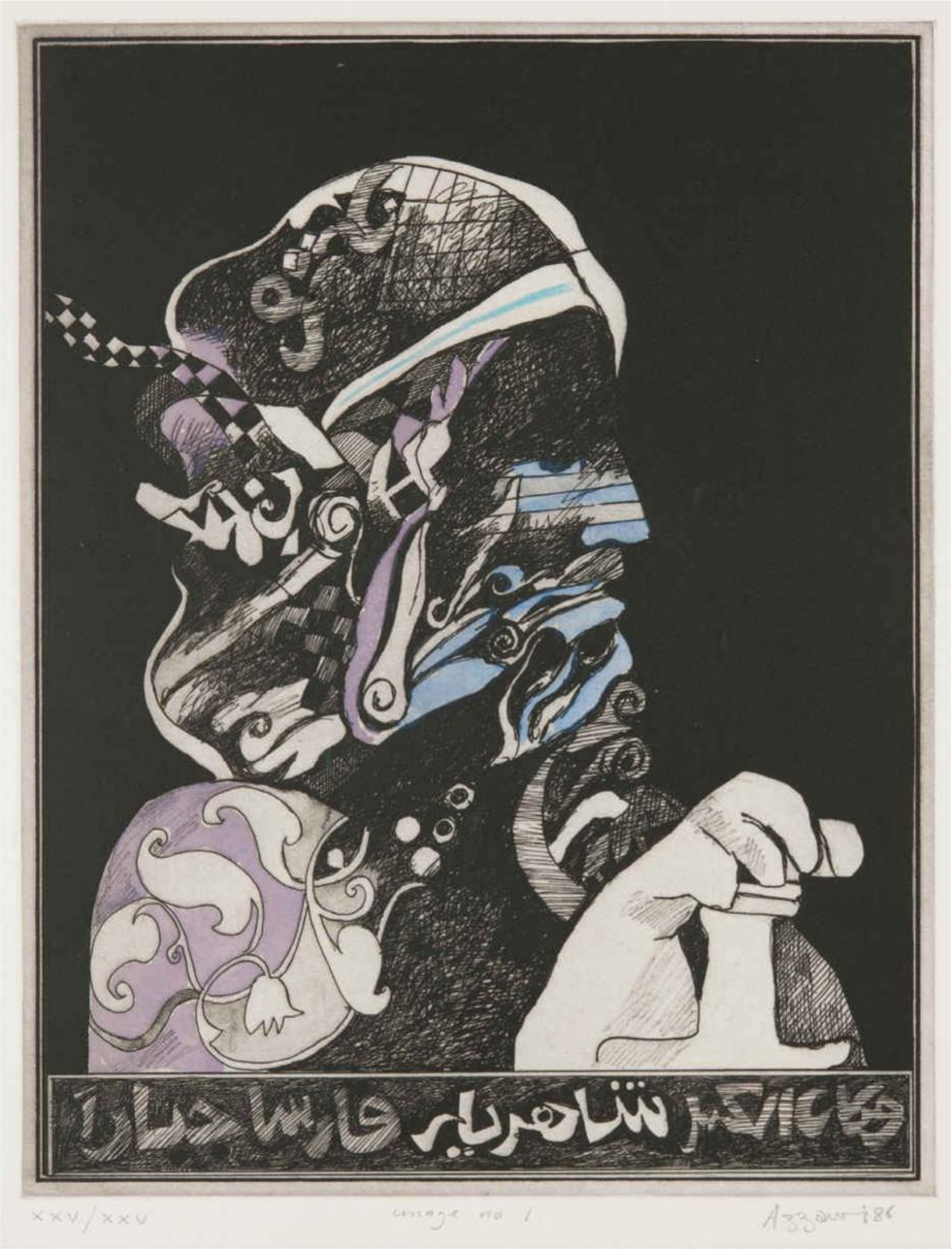


blamed myself for that which I had done, and for my
having undertaken this voyage and fatigue after I had been
reposing at ease in my abode and my country, in ample
happiness, and enjoying good food and good drink and
good appar[illegible] and had not been in want of any thing, either
of mon[illegible] goods or merchandise. I repented of my
having [redacted]
a v
du at the point of destruction,
and s
retur
the Then I
climb it to the
sight save ater, and
t birds, however,
w me the island
a wh indistinctly enormous
size. owards it,
and p[illegible] in [illegible] direction without stopping until I
arrived [illegible] it was a h[illegible] white dome, of great
height and [illegible] circumference. I drew near to it, and
walked round it, [illegible] perceived no door to it; and I found
that I had not strength nor activity to climb it, on account
of its exceeding smoothness. I made a mark at the place

ES-SINDIBAD OF THE SEA
257
sleepless,
with shining
proceeded to select,
of which I will give thee
and carry the stones to their co
for the birds and the wild beasts
that meat, and take from it the
he was, of all the creation, the
countenance, like the moon at the full
story extraordinary, and the cause of
there came forth from
into my pocket, and within my clothes;
I then selected great number of these stones and
I membered this story I arose and went to the sla
the diamonds but by means of this stratagem.
stones sticking to it, after
clattering with a piece of wood upon the mountain;
flew away in fear, and soared into the sky.
forehead, and red cheek and hair resembling
when I beheld that slaughtered animal,
HC XVI—I

I.

TALES FROM ARABIC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XXV/XXV
image no 1
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Shahriyar. *Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.*

THE STORY OF KING SHAHRIYAR AND HIS VIZIER’S DAUGHTER, SHAHRAZAD

Shahrazad narrates a bewildering range of stories in One Thousand and One Nights, *but her own story is not one of them. The opening tale introduces the trials of two brother kings who see themselves as the victims of shocking acts of infidelity by their respective wives and are convinced of the essential duplicity of women after an encounter with the captive bride of a jinni. Suffering from his sexual betrayal, King Shahriyar ignores his responsibilities as ruler and promptly launches an unrestrained campaign of violence by marrying and murdering a new bride each day. This frame tale is undoubtedly a shock for those expecting the gentler charms of a European fairy tale, and it was systematically edited out in children’s editions of the* Arabian Nights. *However, it is key to the fundamental themes that have shaped the reception of the collection over the last three centuries.*

For Western readers who encountered the Arabian Nights *in the first European translations, Shahriyar’s slide into a vindictive rage that threatens his whole kingdom was often associated with the dangers of Eastern tyranny as well as erotic fantasies of the harem. However, others read this narrative of violent misrule alongside stories in the* Nights *that focus on an idealized Caliph Harun al-Rashid to engage in a broader consideration of issues of justice and governance within their own* *societies. The latter approach is characteristic of later Arab novelists who draw on the tales of the* Nights. *In the novel* Arabian Nights and Days *(1979), for example, Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz employs motifs from the story collection to create his own Shahriyar, who will learn to recognize the corruption of his realm and the importance of dispensing justice and mercy.*

Other critics focus on Shahriyar as a powerful symbol of patriarchal violence, and feminist interpretations of the Nights *highlight Shahrazad's intervention in the frame tale as an inspiring tale of courage and resourcefulness in the face of male oppression. Her determination to save her kingdom by offering herself as a bride and weaving a nightly web of stories to distract and reeducate the broken king provides a model of resistance that continues to inspire readers. In this interpretation, Shahrazad must slowly dismantle Shahriyar's belief that women cannot be trusted by gradually expanding the king's experience to include the many different kinds of women who people the stories of the* Nights*: the faithful lovers, the clever slave girls, the loyal sisters, the devoted mothers. Some critics have seen this process as an extended humanistic education designed to sensitize Shahriyar to the intricacies of human behavior. Others have adopted a psychoanalytical model and describe Shahrazad's storytelling as a unique form of "talking cure" designed to treat a classic case of psychosis.*

Whether or not it is seen as tinged by madness, the relationship between Shahriyar and Shahrazad sets up a fundamental tension within the collection as a whole between male and female characters. Some stories in the One Thousand and One Nights *ask pointed questions about the morality of women—such as those tales collected in the cycle called "The Wiles of Women"—but other tales strongly assert the contrary and expose the corruption that lies in the hearts of men. Lebanese author Hanan al-Shaykh, who has produced her own rewriting of the tales, sees the* Nights *as defined by this constant battle of the sexes rather than just the misogyny expressed by Shahriyar in the opening tale. Shahrazad's sister Dunyazad remains present throughout these long nights of storytelling, and it is tempting to see her as a surrogate for the female audience for these tales. Drawn into a loving alliance with her sister, Dunyazad is receiving her* *own education in the struggle for power between men and women and the many forms of resistance.*

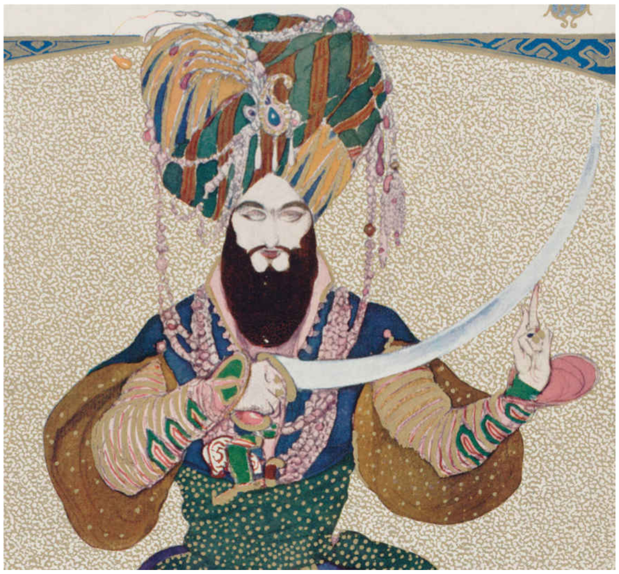
Above all, the opening tale of the Nights *introduces the character of Shahrazad to the world, thereby providing one of the most influential demonstrations of the power of storytelling in literature. Her example has inspired generations of writers—some of whom have chosen to express themselves in similar conditions of oppression and violence. For Marina Warner, Shahrazad is the ultimate example of the value of the writer's art: "The power of stories to forge destinies has never been so memorably and sharply put as it is in this cycle, in which the blade of the executioner's sword lies on the storyteller's neck*" (Stranger Magic, *p. 5*). *In the* Arabian Nights*, stories become the weapon that sustains life against the threat of oblivion, and A. S. Byatt argues that this is a threat that every reader faces: "We are all, like Scheherazade, under sentence of death, and we all think of our lives as narratives, with beginnings, middles, and ends" ("Narrate or Die").*

THE STORY GOES[1] (but God knows more than us about the truth of times gone by) that long ago, in the Sasanian age, two brothers ruled over the islands of India and China, and their names were Shahriyar and Shahzaman.

The elder, Shahriyar,[2] was strong on a horse and bold with a blade, never beaten and never burned, quick to revenge and slow to forgive. His dominion spread to the corners of the land until the far edges fell under his sway, and he chose India for his seat, and to his brother he gave Samarkand.

Ten years had gone by when Shahriyar one day desired to see his brother[3] and sent his vizier to fetch him. The vizier (who had two daughters, Shahrazad and Dunyazad) journeyed day and night. Shahzaman, on hearing he was near, rode out to meet him, came down from his horse and kissed his cheeks, and asked after his brother Shahriyar.

The vizier said that he was well but missed his brother, and Shahzaman promised he would go. He set up the vizier outside the city, saw to his needs, sent him food and fodder, killed many sheep in his honor, and gave him horses and camels and silver. When he was ready, he charged a lord with ruling in his place and spent the eve of his departure in his tent, near the vizier, then returned at midnight to the city to bid his wife good-bye.



Official program of the Ballets Russes season at the Paris Opéra, June 1910. Sergei Diaghilev's famous production of Schéhérazade *highlighted the sexual jealousy and violent impulses of the ruler in the opening tale of the* 1001 Nights.

On entering the palace, he found his wife asleep, her limbs entwined in the limbs of a kitchen boy. The world went dark before his eyes, and he thought, "If this is what she does when I have hardly left the city, how will she behave when I am far away? Women have no faith."[4]

And he went into a rage.

"I am a king," he said, "and Samarkand is mine, but my wife betrays me before my own eyes!"

In the heat of rage, he drew his sword and drove it into his wife and the cook, killing the lovers where they lay. Then he dragged them by the heels and threw them from the palace to the ditch below.

Leaving the city, he found the vizier and gave the order to go, and to the beat of drums they left. The king's heart burned in his chest at the memory of what his wife had done, how she had dared replace him with some kitchen boy, some cook. …

They made haste, riding without rest through sand and wild, until they reached the realm of Shahriyar, who rode out to greet them, kissed his brother, showed him favors, and gave him quarters in the palace near his own. Shahriyar had built in his garden two palaces, one for the women of his house and one for guests, and in this second house he put his brother after the staff had gone to scrub and sweep and furnish it and open wide the windows on the garden.

Shahzaman spent the days with his brother, setting foot in his palace only to sleep and rushing back to his brother in the morning. But when he was alone, his thoughts would turn to the trouble with his wife, he would let a sigh escape and hide his grief, and he wondered that such anguish could be suffered by someone of his rank. He wanted to die, his spirit sank, and he thought no man had been through what he had.

Eaten by sadness, he ate less and less. His color went, then his strength, and worrying, neglecting everything, he grew very thin. Day by day, Shahriyar could see his brother's eyes lose their shine, his cheeks their glow, his frame its shape, and he thought it was down to his missing home. "My brother is unhappy here," he thought. "Let us cover him in treats and let him go."

And for a month he only gathered gifts, then he called for his brother and said, "I am going to hunt deer for ten days. Will you join me? Then we shall prepare your journey home."

"Brother," said Shahzaman, "I am depressed and cannot find relief. Go hunt alone, and God be with you."

Shahriyar, who believed it was his country that he missed, did not insist, and went off with his guards into the wild, where in a circle they began to hunt.

And Shahzaman, alone, looked out the window at the birds and trees, his mind on his wife and what she had done, a sigh on his lips. Lost in thought, he turned his eyes now to the sky, now to the garden, when he saw the secret gate of the palace open, and from it emerge his brother's wife and twenty female slaves[5]—ten dark, ten light. She walked among them[6] like a doe with eyes now black, now bright.

Shahzaman, unseen, watched them stroll until they stopped under his window, thinking he was at the hunt, and shed their clothes. It turned out that the ten dark slaves[7] were men dressed as women. The men mounted the women, then the lady of the house called out "Masud! Masud!" and out of the tree a slave came down to join her. He raised the lady's legs and entered her, and they went on making love (the men to the women, Masud to the mistress) until half the day was gone.

When they were all done, they rose and washed. The men slipped back into the women's clothes and mingled with the rest, so that once more they seemed to be a crowd of twenty female slaves. Masud disappeared behind the garden wall, while the lady and her slaves wandered back to the secret gate and into the palace, locking the gate behind them.

And Shahzaman, who had not missed a moment of this scene, considered the misfortune of his older brother—ten of his slaves dressed as women, the better to sleep with them in his own palace! His own wife with Masud!—and his heart lifted, anguish eased. "This is our common lot,"[8] he thought. "My brother, king and master of the world though he may be, is not safe from attack, even from his women and his wife. Disaster lurks at home! What is my own sadness next to this? I believed that only I had suffered, but now I know that we all suffer—I less than my brother!"

He wondered at the ways of fate, the turns of fortune none escapes, and he forgot his cares. When the time for dinner came, he ate with relish and drank with zest, and the better he felt, the greater pleasure he took in the feast until his only thought was, "I am well."

For ten days he feasted, and at his brother Shahriyar's return he greeted him all smiles, high on a cheerful mood. They sat together talking until night, and when food was brought they ate and drank, none with more delight than Shahzaman. And as he ate and drank his heart grew lighter, color pinker, sorrow paler, and his blood ran faster. He was fatter now, himself again, and better!

Shahriyar, who could not help but see his brother changed, kept it to himself until one day, when he took him aside and said, "Do me a favor, brother, and tell me the truth."

"What truth?" said Shahzaman.

"You were gaunt when I left you, brother, wasting away, utterly changed, so weak and pale I thought it must be for home that you ached, but I said nothing (the worse you looked, the less I said) and left you alone to go hunting. But now that I am back, I find you full of vigor, eating with hunger, and I want to know: what was the matter? And what made the color return to your cheeks?"

Shahzaman, eyes to the ground, replied, “I cannot tell you what it was that made me better.”

And his brother burned to know more.

“Tell me first,” said Shahriyar, “why you were pale.”

And Shahzaman told him what had happened with his own wife the night he left, from start to end.

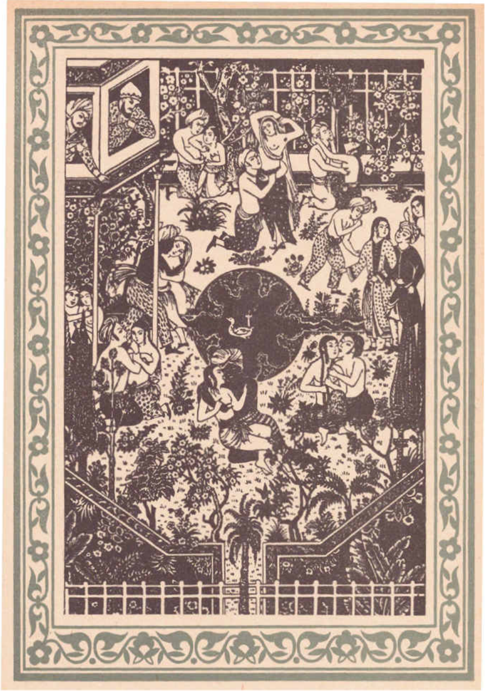
“And while I was with you,” he said, “I could not turn my thoughts from what I’d suffered. That is the reason for the change you saw.”

Shahriyar shook his head in wonder at the tricks of women and sought refuge in God from their harm.

“Brother,” he said, “you did well to kill your wife and her lover, and you had every reason to give in to grief. I daresay what happened to you has happened to no other man, and if I were you, I would have killed a hundred women, or a thousand! I would have gone mad.”

He gave thanks to God for the change in his brother and asked him, again, for the cause.

“I wish,” said Shahzaman, “you wouldn’t ask.”



The Queen and Her Attendants in the Palace Garden. *Illustration by Nikolai Alexeyevich Ushin, from the first Russian translation of* One Thousand and One Nights *directly from an Arabic source (published by translator Mikhail Salye between 1929 and 1939). Ushin’s illustrations for* *the* Nights *were honored with a gold medal at the 1937 Paris Exposition. Image courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

“But I must know.”

“I fear you will be thrown into worse grief than mine.”

“Go on.”

Shahzaman described what he had seen, and the disaster lurking in his brother’s home (slaves making love to slaves, men dressed as women, night and day!), and told him the story from start to end (no need to repeat it now). Then he said, “When I saw how bad your luck was, I felt better. Here was my brother, king of the earth, unlucky in his own home! That is the reason for the color in my cheeks.”

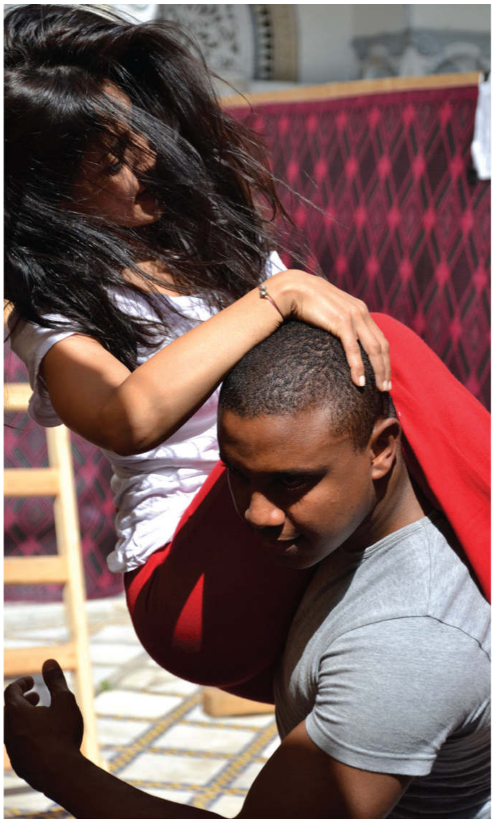
Shahriyar became so angry he could bleed.

“I won’t believe a thing,” he said, “until I see it with my eyes.”

“Pretend,” said Shahzaman, “you plan to hunt. You and I shall leave the city with your guards, and when our tents are raised, we will return and steal into the palace out of sight. And in the morning, you will see what I mean.”

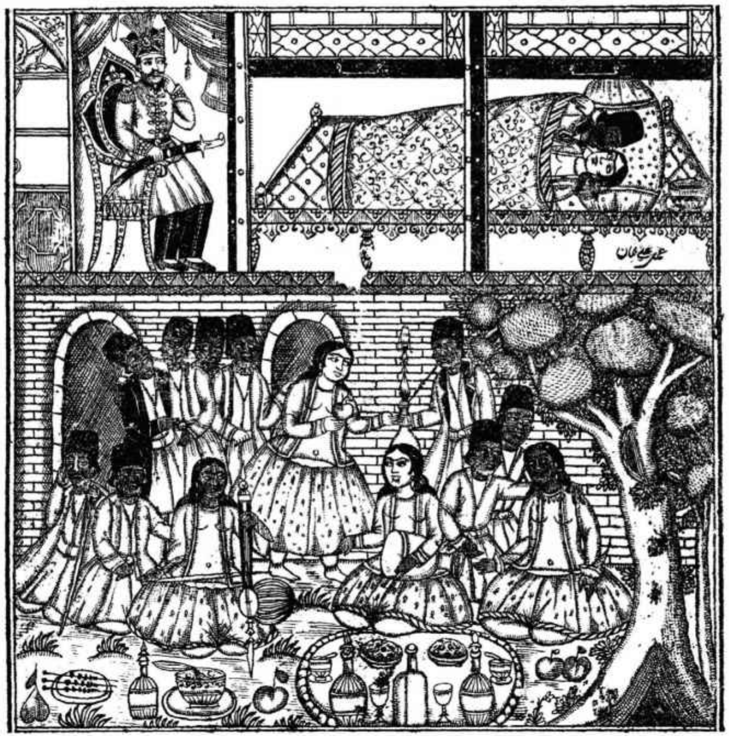
The king, knowing his brother was right, gave the order to the guards. When God’s morning broke, they rode out of the city (the servants having gone ahead to pitch the tents), and when night fell, the king charged an officer to keep order in the camp and make sure no man entered the city for three days.

In disguise, Shahriyar and Shahzaman returned to the city that night and stole into the palace. They slept there until dawn, when they sat at the window, watching the garden and talking until sunrise. When it was light, they saw the secret gate open, and the wife of Shahriyar emerged as usual with the twenty female slaves, walking among the trees until they stopped under the window where the two kings sat.



Rehearsals in Fez, Morocco, for Tim Supple's adaption of One Thousand and One Nights, *in collaboration with Hanan al-Shaykh. Actors: Houda Echouafni and Eslam Eissa. Photo by Sophie Austin.*

Then the ten dark slaves shed their disguises and fell on the women, the lady of the house called out,[9] "Masud! Masud!" and out of the tree one slave appeared and said, "What is it? Here is Saadeddin Masud!" She laughed and fell on her back, and the slave took his pleasure with her, and the others did the same. Then they all rose, washed and dressed, entered the palace, and locked the gate. Masud leapt over the wall and went on his way.



Shahriyar's queen and her attendants in the garden. From the 1900 edition of Hezār Dāstān, a versified version of The Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by 'Ali Khān. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

Shahriyar's mind nearly left him.[10]

"No one is safe in this world," he said, "if there are such things in my kingdom, in my own home! Damn the world and damn this life! What a disaster."

And, turning to his brother, "Will you join me in what I will do next?"

"I will."

"Let us forget that we are kings and roam the world, returning only if we meet someone unluckier than us."

"Yes, let's."

* * *

THEY LEFT THE PALACE by the secret gate, took a side road, and roamed until night, and slept over their sorrows. In the morning, they wandered onto a field by the salty sea, thick with plants and trees. They sat there to talk about their sadness, when a shout and a cry rang out from the heart of the sea, fear made them shudder, and it seemed the sky had fallen on the earth.

Then the sea parted and a black column rose from the waves, growing taller as it neared until it touched the clouds. The brothers took to their heels afraid, climbed a tree, and hid among its leaves. And when they looked again, they saw the column slicing through the sea until it came to shore.

When it landed, they saw what it was: a jinni,[11] bearing on his head a large glass chest with four steel locks, and where should he stop in the field but under the tree where the brothers were hiding. The jinni sat, laid the glass chest on the ground, opened the locks with four different keys, and out of the chest came a young woman, fully grown and finely made, with a lovely smile and a face like the moon.[12]

The jinni helped her out of the chest, sat her under the tree, and said, “Pearl among women whom I carried away[13] on your wedding night, I want to sleep.”

His head in her lap, he stretched his legs to the sea and sank with a snore into sleep. The woman looked up at the tree, saw the sheltering men, lifted the jinni’s head from her knees and laid it on the ground, and went to stand below the tree, motioning to them as if to say, “Come down.”

And when they saw they had been seen, they were afraid and begged her, by the One who raised the sky, to be excused.

“You must come down,” she said, but they motioned that the sleeping thing beside her was the enemy of man.

“You must come down,” she said, “and if you don’t, I shall wake the jinni and he will kill you.”

She kept up her threats until they came down from the tree. When they were in front of her, she lay on her back, raised her legs, and said, “Make love to me and give me satisfaction, or I will set the jinni on you.”

The fury of the king. Assaad Bouab and Saad Al Ghefari in Fez rehearsal for Tim Supple's adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights. *Photo by Sophie Austin.*

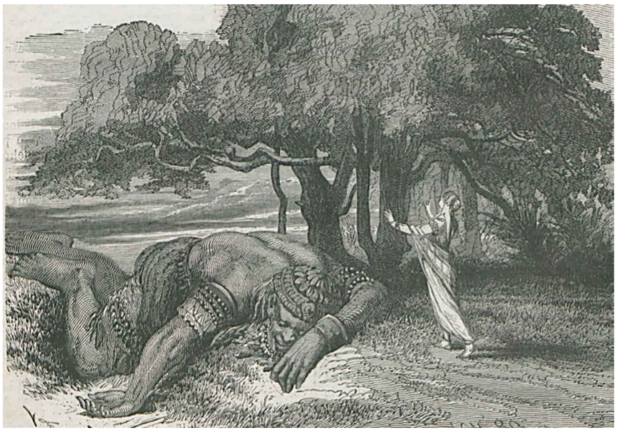
"We cannot move," they said, "with terror for the jinni."

"You must," she said, "or I shall wake the jinni, my husband, who will throw you in the sea."

When they knew they could resist no longer, they made love to her—first the older king, then the younger. And when they were done, she said, "Now give me your rings."

She pulled from the folds of her clothes a little purse, opened it, and shook out ninety-eight rings,[14] each a different style and color, and said, "Do you know what these are?"

"No," they said.



The jinni's stolen bride calls down the kings. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

“All the owners of these rings,” she said, “have slept with me, and from each one I took a ring. Now give me yours, so that I may add them to the rest and have a hundred rings to mark the hundred men who slept with me under the horns of this revolting jinni, who has held me in this chest under four locks and keys, and kept me in the middle of the raging, roaring sea! He thought he had me[15] and could keep me for himself, forgetting that what fortune has in store cannot be turned, nor what a woman wants.”

The brothers, dazed and dancing at her words, cried out, “Allah! Allah! There is no power and no might except in God, and no outwitting women.”

Each of them removed his ring. She slipped them in her purse among the others, returned to the jinni’s side, heaved his head onto her lap again, and shooed the kings away.

Back on the road, Shahriyar said to his brother, “Consider this mess, and how much worse it is than ours: a jinni carried off a woman on her wedding night, held her captive in a chest under four locks, and kept her at the bottom of the sea, believing he could keep her safe from fate. Yet you saw how she has slept with ninety-eight, plus two, one hundred men! Let us go back to our kingdoms and our cities, never to marry again.”[16]

They journeyed until night back to the city, where Shahriyar went to his palace, sent for his vizier and said, “Get my wife and have her killed.”[17]

Shahriyar went to her himself, tied her up, and handed her to the vizier, who took her out and killed her.

Then Shahriyar took up his sword, stormed every room of his palace, killing the slaves as he passed, and replaced them with others. He swore never to marry for longer than a night and kill his brides by morning, to save himself from trickery and harm, and said, “No woman can be trusted.”

Then he readied his brother to go and sent him on his way with rarities and gifts, and Shahzaman went home. Shahriyar sat on his throne and ordered his vizier to choose for him a wife among the daughters of his princes, which he did. Shahriyar married her that day, went to bed with her, and when morning broke, he had her killed.

That very night he took another wife, the daughter of an officer, and slept with her, and in the morning gave the order for her death. The vizier, unable to resist, put her to death.

On the third night, he took a merchant's daughter, and when the sun came up, he had her killed.

It became his custom every night to take a different wife, spend the night with her, and have her murdered in the morning. He did this until all the girls were gone, their mothers in mourning, and a clamor rose among the fathers and the mothers[18] of the land, who wished a plague upon the king and called to the creator of the heavens for protection, and prayed for help to Him who hears and answers prayers.

* * *

NOW THE VIZIER who had the women murdered had two daughters of his own, the elder Shahrazad and the younger Dunyazad.

Shahrazad had read a lot of books,[19] science and philosophy, knew poetry by heart, had studied history and myth and the wisdom of kings, and she was practiced at clear thinking and full feeling and close reading. One day she said to her father, "Let me tell you what is on my mind."

"What is it?"

"I want you to marry me to Shahriyar, so that I may liberate my people[20] or die trying."

"Foolish child," he said, "do you not know that Shahriyar spends only one night with his wife and kills her in the morning? If I give you to him, he will sleep with you and have you killed, and I will have to do it."

"Let him kill me."

"Why put yourself in danger?"

"I have made my choice," said Shahrazad.

And her father, furious, said, "My girl, those who throw caution to the wind end up in dust. I worry that what happened to the donkey and the ox with the merchant will happen to you."

"What happened to them, Father?"

And he said …

THE TALE OF THE DONKEY AND THE OX[21]

THERE ONCE was a merchant with plenty of money and men, camels and cattle, and a wife and children, big and small, who lived off his land. He had been taught the language of beasts,[22] wild and tame, on the condition that if he told his secret, he would die.

In his stable were a donkey and an ox, tethered to their troughs. As he sat beside them one day, his wife and children nearby, the merchant heard the ox say to the donkey:

"To your health! What it must be to live in milk and honey, to be waited on and fed sifted barley and cooled with crystal water, while I am taken out to plow at night, forced to wear a thing they call a yoke around my neck, and made to work all day turning the field, driven past endurance and pushed until my sides are cut to shreds under the whip, my neck to ribbons!

"Oh they work me night to night, take me home in the dark, and throw me beans dripping mud and straw laced with chaff, and leave me on a bed of piss and dung, while you rest on watered ground and pillows of clean hay. You live in comfort, save for the rare day our master needs you for an errand, never for long. You rest when I am tired. You sleep when I am awake."

The donkey turned to the ox and said:

"They were not wrong to call you beasts of burden. You shoulder every load without a word. There is no side to you, no guile, you are not wise to them, nor will you listen to those of us who are. Instead you break your back so they may lie at ease, at the first call to prayer you are taken to the field where only pain awaits. In the manger, tethered to your trough, you have to ram it with your horns and kick and scream, and bellow for the beans until they're flung your way!

"Try this instead. Next time they bring you food, refuse to eat or touch it, do no more than sniff it and withdraw, lie on the straw, and you will have the sweeter life you seek, and you will find relief …"

* * *

THE OX, who knew the donkey’s words would serve him well, thanked him in his language and prayed to God that he be safe from harm.

(The merchant understood all they had said.)

In the morning, when the plowman came to set the yoke around his neck, the ox was slow to move, and under the man’s blows he tried a ruse.[23] He threw himself to earth, took another beating, but kept up his trick of tripping, every step a stumble until night. When the plowman took him back and tied him to the trough, the ox did nothing, did not shout or stamp the ground but drew away. And when the beans were brought he did not touch them, but settled on the hay and fell asleep.

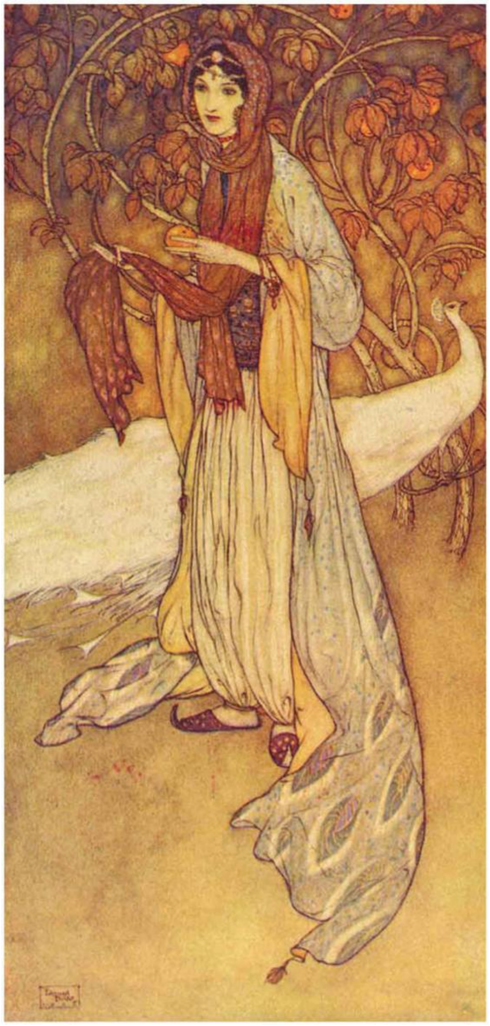
When the plowman found the trough as full as he had left it, and the ox on his back, belly bloated (he was holding his breath) and legs in the air, the plowman pitied him and thought, “He did seem weak. He must be sick.”

He went to the merchant and said, “Master, the ox did not touch his food last night.”

And the merchant, who knew the story, said to the plowman, “Get that wily donkey, put him to the plow and let him do the ox’s work.”

The plowman fetched the donkey, set the yoke upon his neck, and drove him to the field to work until his sides were cut to shreds under the whip, his neck to ribbons. He took him home at night with dragging legs and drooping ears.

The ox, meanwhile, had spent the day at rest. He ate and drank his fill and took his time. All day long he praised the donkey’s good advice, and stood to greet him returning.



Shahrazad. *Illustration by Edmund Dulac, produced during what is considered the "Golden Age" of fantasy book illustration at the beginning of the twentieth century. From* Stories from the Arabian Nights, *retold by Laurence Housman (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907).*

"Good evening! You have done me a kindness beyond words. God bless you."

But the donkey, raging and regretting his mistake, said nothing.

"I must devise a way," he thought, "to turn the tables back, or I am doomed."

And he lay down by his trough as the ox went on praising him to heaven.

* * *

“AND YOU, my girl,”[24] said the vizier, “are also doomed if you persist in your mistake. Stay here in peace and don’t expose yourself to harm.”

“I must go to the king,” said Shahrazad, “and you must give me to him.”

“Don’t,” he said.

“I must.”

“If you do not obey,” he said, “I’ll do to you what the merchant did to his wife.”

“What did he do?”

And he said …

THE TALE OF THE MERCHANT AND HIS WIFE

THE MERCHANT and his wife went out in moonlight to the stable, and he heard the donkey say in his own language to the ox, “What will you do tomorrow when the plowman brings you food?”

“What should I do but follow your advice? I will pretend to be sick, lie on my back, and fill my belly with air.”

“Don’t do it,” said the donkey. “Do you know what I heard our master say to the merchant?”

“What?”

“He said that if the ox failed to get up, he would have him slaughtered and use the meat for alms, the skin for a mat! I have to warn you: When they bring you food, eat it and look alert or they will skin you.”

The ox let out a whimper and a fart, and the merchant gave a great laugh at this turn in their talk.

“Why do you laugh?” asked his wife. “Are you making fun of me?”

“No,” he said.

“Tell me what made you laugh.”

“It is a secret I am scared to reveal.”

“What are you scared of?”

“Death.”

"You lie. If you do not tell me why you laughed, I will leave you." Then she went back to the house and wept there until morning. The merchant said, "Why do you weep? Forget your question and leave me in peace."

"But I must know."

"But I will die."

"Then die," she said.

"Then tell your family to come."

She brought her parents, her two daughters, and some neighbors. The merchant said he was about to die, and everyone began to weep (little children, farm boys, slaves) and mourn as if he were already gone. The merchant called for witnesses and made his wishes known. He left his wife and children their due share,[25] and freed his slaves and bid them all good-bye.

Then the wife's parents came forward and said, "Drop it. If your husband were not certain he would die, he would not do all this."

"I will not change my mind," she said, and everybody cried and mourned his death.

Now it happened, Shahrazad, that this farm had a rooster and fifty hens, and as the merchant faced the prospect of his death, he overheard the dog say something in his language to the rooster, who was busy leaping from one hen to the next.

"Are you not ashamed to do that on a day like this?"

"A day like what?"

"Do you not know our master's house is grieving? His wife insists that he reveal his secret, knowing he will die. We are all in mourning while you flap your wings and skip from one hen to the other without shame."

The merchant heard the rooster say, "Our master is a fool, though he claims to be wise. He has only one wife but cannot manage her."

"What should he do with her?"

"He should take an oak branch,[26] lock her in a room, and beat her there until he breaks her arms and legs and she cries out that she no longer wants to know, beat her until she is cured and never again will stand in his way."

When the merchant heard this, Shahrazad, he rushed to fetch a branch and pushed his wife into a room and locked the door. He fell on her with blows until she said, “No! No! I’ll never ask again! Let me go! Let me go!”

Then he opened the door and his wife emerged repentant, and everyone was glad, and mourning turned to joy.

* * *

“AND IF you do not change your mind,” said the vizier, “I shall do to you what the merchant did to his wife.”

“These stories,” said Shahrazad, “do not impress me.[27] I could tell you many more. If you do not take me to the king yourself, I will go behind your back and tell him you refused to marry me to him.”

“Must you really do this?” asked her father.

And she said, “I must.”

The vizier, exhausted, went to see the king and kissed the ground before him, and offered him his daughter.

The king was amazed.

“How is it,” he said, “that you give me your daughter, knowing I will ask you to kill her by morning, and that if you refuse, I will kill you too?”

“She knows all this,” said the vizier, “and she insists.”

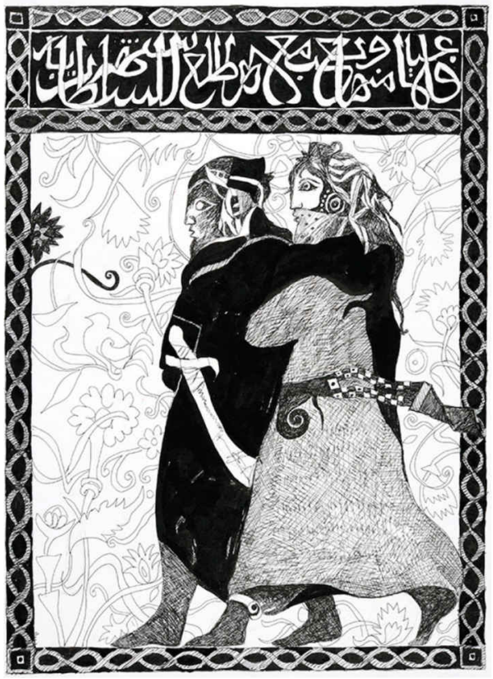
“Go,” said the happy king, “prepare her things, and bring her here this evening.”

* * *

THE VIZIER brought the news to his daughter and said, “God help me in your absence.”

Shahrazad, satisfied, prepared herself and packed what she would need, then went to find her younger sister Dunyazad.

“Sister,” she said, “listen. When I am with the king, I will send for you.[28] Come, and when you see that he has finished with me, say, ‘Sister, if you are not sleepy, tell me a story.’ I will begin a story that will end on my deliverance and my people’s, and the king changing his ways.”



The vizier goes to Shahriyar to offer him his daughter. Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi, 1985; printed with the permission of the artist.

And Dunyazad said, “Yes.”[29]

* * *

When night came, the vizier brought Shahrazad to Shahriyar, but when the king took her to bed and pawed at her, she wept. When he asked her why, she said, “I have a little sister, and I want to say good-bye to her before the night is done.”

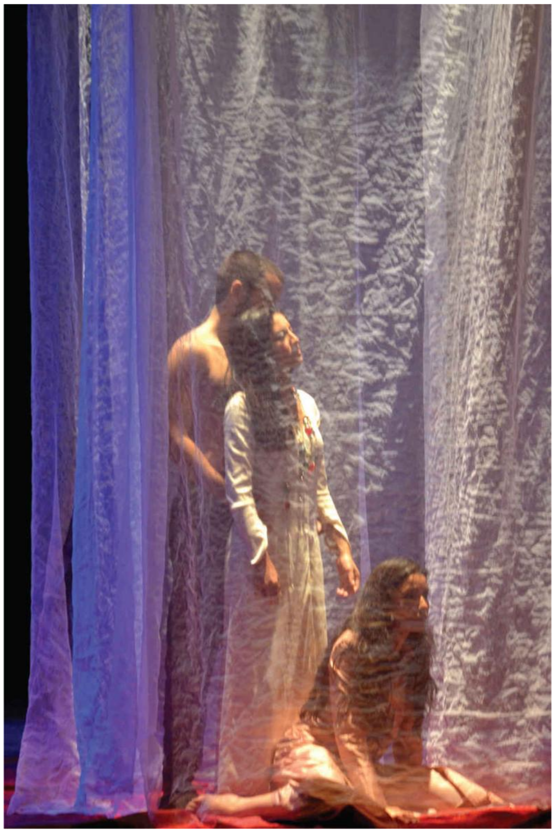
The king sent for Dunyazad, who came and went to sleep under the bed. She woke when it was dark and waited for the king to finish with her sister.

When they were done, Dunyazad cleared her throat and said, “Sister, if you are not sleepy, tell us one of your lovely stories to while away the night before I say good-bye at dawn. Who knows what tomorrow holds for you?”

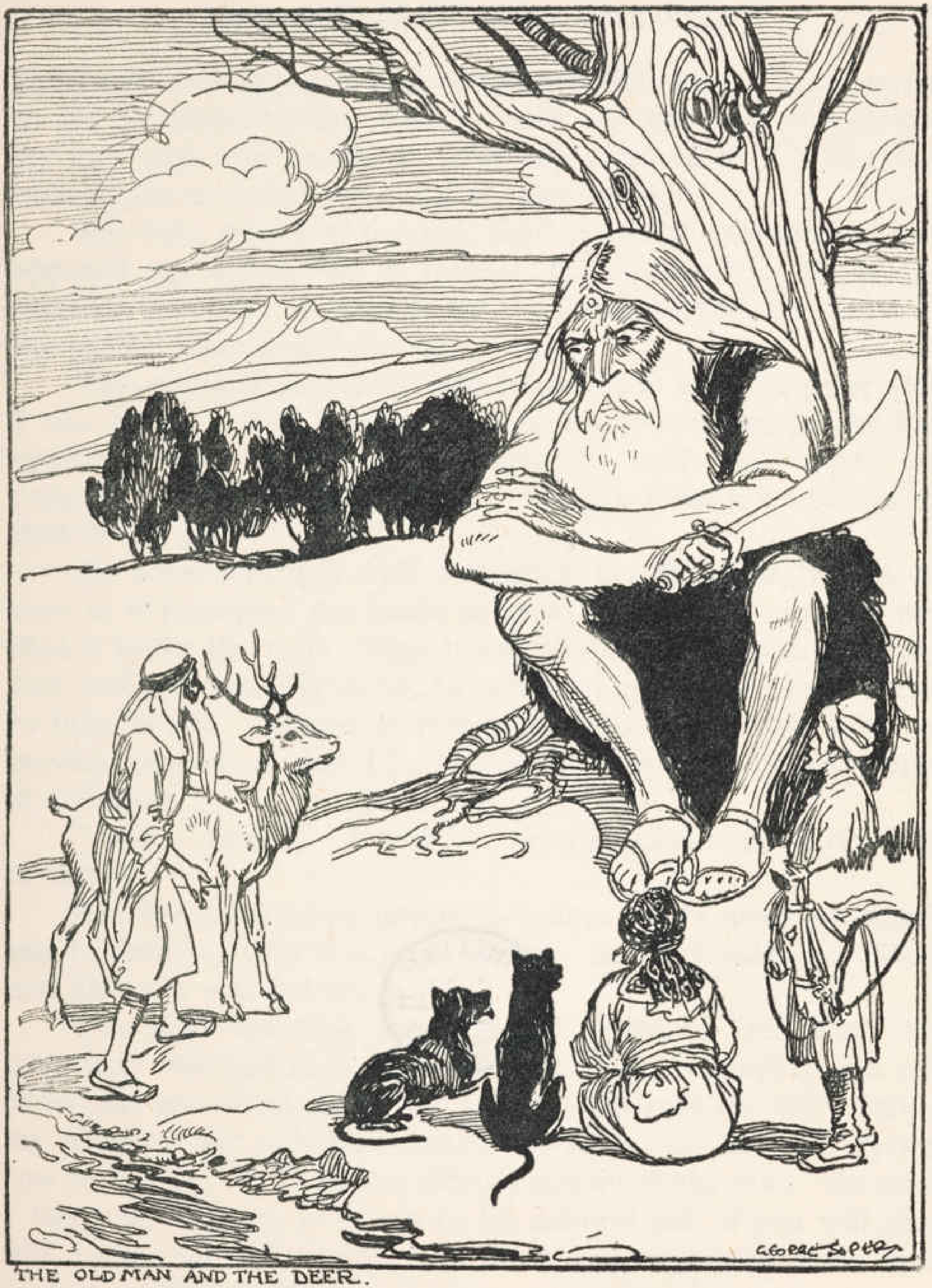
Shahrazad turned to the king and said, “May I tell a story?”

“Yes,” he said.

And she said, “Listen.”[30]



The wedding night. Shahrazad summons her sister Dunyazad and begins telling her tales. Tim Supple's stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights *in performance at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Actors: Assaad Bouab, Houda Echouafni, and Hajar Graigaa. Photo by Sophie Austin.*


GEORGE SOPER

THE OLD MAN AND THE DEER.

The jinni listens as the first old man tells his story. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

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1. *The story goes:* The use of frame tales to gather a number of stories together can be seen in ancient Sanskrit texts, but the characters' names and the positioning of this tale in the Sasanian age (226–641 CE) indicate the importance of a Persian context in the genesis of this tale. Despite this specific reference, the *Nights* is not bound to a specific chronology, and historical events from different periods mingle in the stories that follow.

2. *The elder, Shahriyar:* This version of the introductory tale emphasizes the strength of King Shahriyar, but another influential manuscript of *The Thousand and One Nights* (translated most recently by Malcolm Lyons) adds significant luster to Shahriyar's character by suggesting that he was renowned for the justice of his rule and beloved by his subjects. In that version, the king's subsequent descent into a campaign of irrational revenge against the innocent women of his kingdom is perhaps more incongruous.

3. *desired to see his brother:* Another version of this frame tale (probably predating this one) appears in the *One Hundred and One Nights*, another Arabic story collection. There the king is vain and the young man summoned to his court is a rival for the title of the most beautiful man alive. At an annual festival, the king commands men to don their finest garments and summons a great mirror for the contest, asking his companions whether they know any man more handsome than he is. The plot is set in motion when an old merchant dares to mention a more beautiful man, the son of a perfume seller in faraway Khurasan (p. 3).

4. *"Women have no faith":* This statement can be seen as only the first salvo in an ongoing debate throughout the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights* to determine whether women or men are the most perfidious of the sexes. Despite the misogyny displayed by the two damaged kings in the frame tale, the stories that follow feature a wide variety of female characters who challenge the negative stereotypes that fuel Shahriyar's rage.

5. *twenty female slaves:* Slaves are an integral part of society as it is presented in the stories of the *1001 Nights*. In the Arab lands in which these tales were born, slaves had a wide variety of origins. They might be Ethiopian or Berber, Turkish or Circassian, from the Balkans or the wider Mediterranean region. References to slaves in the *Nights* at times reflect what Muhsin al-Musawi suggests is "an underlying preference for whiteness, a preference that runs counter to Islamic teaching" (p. 86).

6. *She walked among them:* The variation on this frame tale contained in *One Hundred and One Nights* has a richer description of the queen: "Her body seemed to be made of light or have the clarity of crystal. It was as if roses took their color from her cheeks and gazelles borrowed their looks from her face and eyes." She is adorned with "a garment woven with gold" and "a crown wreathed with various jewels." The scene is accompanied by music, "[t]he slave girls held long- and short-necked lutes, drums, timpani, and flutes in their hands and they began to move and dance and wave their arms about" (p. 13).

7. *ten dark slaves were men:* Robert Irwin presents this moment of sexual and racist paranoia focused on the figure of the slave as an instance of a more widespread phenomenon in medieval Arab society, and it is echoed in tales such as “The Three Apples” and “The Enchanted Prince.”

8. *“This is our common lot”:* The doubled story of the cuckolded kings is replicated in *Orlando Furioso*, Ludovico Ariosto’s sixteenth-century epic poem. When King Jocondo arrives at his brother Astolfo’s court, he finds that Astolfo has also been betrayed by his wife and is heartened by the discovery. Repeating the pattern in the frame tale of the *Nights*, the two brother kings set out on a journey to discover whether there is such a thing as a faithful woman.

9. *the lady of the house called out:* Explanations for the behavior of Shahriyar’s unnamed queen and her sexual partner have varied widely over the centuries. While early readings saw this public act of sexual infidelity as an expression of innate depravity, more recent commentators such as Katie Trumpener see the actions of the unfaithful women in the frame tale as “desperate attempts to find some narrow scope of action and freedom in a world that has enslaved or fettered them” (p. 220).

10. *Shahriyar’s mind nearly left him:* Some interpretations of the frame tale suggest that Shahriyar is indeed driven into madness by the sight of his wife’s betrayal and that this is the necessary explanation for his subsequent campaign of murder. In his psychoanalytical interpretation, Bruno Bettelheim argues that Shahriyar symbolizes a person completely dominated by the primitive impulses of the id, while Shahrazad represents the control exercised through the ego. Only through a merging of the two can health be restored to the kingdom (pp. 88–89).

11. *they saw what it was: a jinni*: In Arab culture, the jinn (singular jinni) are created of fire and possess supernatural powers. They inhabit their own kingdoms but may also live among humans, although they typically are invisible. They are neither the angels nor the demons of Christian cosmology. Henry Torrens, a translator of the *Arabian Nights*, claimed that they were “mortal in their nature, and subject to human wants and passions” (p. ii, n. 7). Jinn are acknowledged in the Qur’an, and some can be considered true Muslims obedient to Allah’s laws. Others rebelled against Solomon—who had been given command over all living creatures by God—and were punished by being imprisoned or thrown into the sea. Some jinn repented in the face of this punishment, but others remained agents of mischief and wickedness.

12. *a face like the moon:* The moon was considered the epitome of beauty in Arabic literature, and it is often used to describe human beauty, both female and male.

13. *“Pearl among women whom I carried away”:* Jinn can be helpful or malevolent, and there are several stories in the *1001 Nights* in which a jinni abducts a woman and hides her in some remote place (see the tales of “The Second Dervish,” “Prince Sayf al-Muluk and Princess Badiʾat al-Jamal,” and “Abu Muhammad the Lazy”). Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen have found analogies for this episode in which a woman is held captive while still finding a way to have sex with other men while her master sleeps. Similar tales appear in the *Katha Sarit Sagara*, an eleventh-century Indian collection of tales, and also in the Persian *Tutinama* from the fourteenth century (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 372).

14. *ninety-eight rings:* The need for a new translation is well demonstrated by the practice of past translators in this episode—notably Burton, who treats the jinni’s stolen bride as the punch line of

a dirty joke. In Burton’s version, the number of rings is 570. He explains that he prefers the humor in the exaggerated number of lovers (vol. 1, p. 12, n. 2).

15. *“He thought he had me”:* In the encounter with the jinni and the captive bride, Shahriyar identifies with the jinni and overlooks the injustice suffered by the captive woman. In his interpretation of the story, Jerome Clinton asks whether Shahriyar’s wife occupied a position similar to that of the jinni’s bride—as “a woman coveted as a precious object and stored away like one to be enjoyed as he wills.” He asks whether she too felt herself to be “the prisoner of a monster whose vastly greater power is vulnerable in only one place” (pp. 489–90). Feminist interpretations of this story see the captive bride’s rebellion as the only way she can assert herself against the jinni’s control of her body.

16. *“never to marry again”:* After a comparable quest in *Orlando Furioso* demonstrates the futility of trying to control the desire of a young woman, Astolfo and Jocondo reach a different conclusion than Shahriyar: that they might as well return to their wives.

17. *“Get my wife and have her killed”:* The violence of the frame tale posed a significant problem for authors adapting it for children. The first person who notably attempted to produce an *Arabian Nights* in English for children was Richard Johnson, who published his moralistic retelling under the moniker Rev. Mr. Cooper in 1791. Unlike some children’s authors who left out the frame altogether, he explained that the sultan had been “dotingly fond” of his wife until she “betrayed his confidence” and was strangled (Alderson, pp. 84–85). George Newnes’s children’s version from 1899 avoided discussion of sexual infidelity but made it seem like Shahriyar’s first queen was betraying her country to foreign enemies, and Helen Marion Burnside’s version from 1893 implied that Shahrazad, and not a previous queen, was guilty in some way (Caracciolo, ed., p. 41)

18. *a clamor arose among the fathers and the mothers:* Shahriyar is clearly perceived as a danger to the whole kingdom, having violated his responsibilities as a ruler. The story is careful to show that different sectors of society have suffered equally from the king’s depredations, and Shahrazad’s comments later in the story indicate that she recognizes that the king’s madness is a threat to the people as a whole.

19. *Shahrazad had read a lot of books:* The description of Shahrazad does not focus on her physical attributes or include the standard formulas for ascribing beauty to a woman. Instead, she exemplifies the value of an educated mind and serves as the first in a series of intelligent and resourceful heroines within the story collection as a whole. In another *Nights* tale, the slave Tawaddud amazes the court of Harun al-Rashid as she debates the foremost scholars of Baghdad on matters of theology, physiology, astronomy, and philosophy. In his French translation of the *Nights*, Antoine Galland felt the need to make Shahrazad “a perfect beauty.”

20. *“so that I may liberate my people”:* In many versions of Shahrazad’s story, the emphasis is placed on her own personal jeopardy. In this translation, it is clear that her goal is not just to survive another day by fascinating Shahriyar with a suspenseful story but rather to free her kingdom from the threat posed by its ruler, even at the cost of her own life. The intriguing question remains whether she herself was willing to kill Shahriyar if her stratagem of storytelling failed. Ros Ballaster describes Shahrazad as “a heroine of state” who risks her life to restore the health of her kingdom (p. 85).

21. *The Tale of the Donkey and the Ox:* The vizier has little faith in his daughter's abilities and this embedded story is meant to demonstrate her foolishness. This kind of "instructive insertion" is the simplest of the many justifications for storytelling in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, but it is not the most common.

22. *He had been taught the language of beasts:* Another Arabic story collection of the Abbasid period, *Kalila wa-Dimna* (a version of the Indian *Panchatantra*), includes animal fables taken from an Indian text arranged as lessons for a king. This story likely has similar roots. Mia Gerhardt argues that this kind of fairy tale featuring animal characters is relatively rare in the *Nights* (pp. 283–84).

23. *under the man's blows, he tried a ruse:* The animal uses his cunning (*makr*) to refuse the control of the merchant. Seale has pointed to the earliest sense of the word *ruse*, "the dodging movements of a hunted animal," as a poignant description of the *Nights* as a whole. "The *Nights* are a long ruse: Shahrazad is employing artful means to save her life."

24. *"And you, my girl":* The vizier drives home the presumed lesson of his story, but Jerome Clinton questions just how persuasive it could be. It is difficult to see how the moral of the story applies to Shahrazad's decision to marry Shahriyar. The vizier appeals to a shallow self-interest when Shahrazad clearly is willing to risk death in pursuit of her goals.

25. *left his wife and children their due share:* These details about the proper way to prepare for death might be interpreted as a way of reminding listeners of their responsibilities within Islam. The freeing of a slave was considered a meritorious act for Muslims. Jack Zipes believes that one of the purposes of the stories of the *Arabian Nights* was to socialize their audiences in Muslim customs and laws through the inclusion of such details (pp. 587–88).

26. *"He should take an oak branch":* Once again, the vizier's story seems to miss the mark by imagining Shahrazad in the position of a woman who requires discipline. His suggestion that she should be cowed into obedience or face violent reprisals seems to indicate that he either does not know his daughter's character or has not yet faced the reality of the situation.

27. *"do not impress me":* Shahrazad confidently dismisses her father's feeble efforts to dissuade her from taking action and asserts the superiority of her storytelling skills. She quickly shows herself capable of issuing a more fearsome threat when she calls the vizier on his own hypocrisy: He has been sending young women to their deaths while protecting his own daughters. Shahrazad refuses to benefit from the same power that terrorizes and murders other women.

28. *"When I am with the king, I will send for you":* The conspiracy between the sisters is an important part of the frame tale and a source of inspiration for later writers. Marina Warner writes that the relationship of the sisters "seemed to be the fullest metaphor for love against death, expressed through the alliance of girls against men in power over them" (p. 5). Ros Ballaster sees this sisterly relationship as a source of political agency for eighteenth-and nineteenth-century authors such as Jane Austen (pp. 93–96). James Joyce, who was deeply influenced by the *Arabian Nights*, also references these "inseparable sisters, uncontrollable nighttalkers," in his novel *Finnegans Wake.*

29. *And Dunyazad said, "Yes":* The presence of Dunyazad in the royal bedchamber was a source of some embarrassment to Antoine Galland, and he took pains in his translation to explain an

arrangement acceptable to his eighteenth-century readers: The sultan and Shahrazad would sleep in a bed in an alcove raised high above the ground (according to Eastern customs), and Dunyazad would sleep in a bed at the very foot of the alcove. In the frame tale of *One Hundred and One Nights*, it is Dunyazad who marries Shahriyar, and her sister Shahrazad tags along to the marriage chamber, and it is Dunyazad who commands her sister to tell a story, without waiting for the king's permission.

30. *And she said, "Listen":* When the time comes for the king to kill Dunyazad in *One Hundred and One Nights*, she says, "Shahrazad my sister! Come and tell the king one of your excellent stories," and she answers, "I'm coming" (p. 21).

THE STORY OF THE MERCHANT AND THE JINNI

Shahrazad begins her first night of storytelling with "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," and it is a natural extension of the opening frame's suggestion that a well-told story can be a potent weapon against the tyrannical threat of violence. Like Shahrazad, the merchant protagonist of this story is under threat of execution, and his life can be redeemed only through the telling of astonishing stories. While traveling on business, the merchant inadvertently kills the invisible child of a jinni by hitting him with a date pit. Despite the fact that the merchant had no intention of doing harm, the fearsome jinni demands justice and announces that he will take the merchant's life for the life of his son. The jinni is only appeased when three old men appear to tell him stories so amazing and entertaining that he forgives the life debt owed to him.

"The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni" offers a prime example of a ransom frame, in which stories are exchanged to save a life. This is the strategy that Shahrazad needs to deploy to stave off her new husband's desire for revenge against the women of his kingdom. In both scenarios, the threat of death appears monstrous. If Shahrazad is utterly innocent, the merchant's offense can at least be identified, but the demand for the ultimate penalty still appears outrageous and the merchant's plight pitiable. In this scenario, the question of justice makes its first appearance in the stories of Shahrazad, perhaps in the hope of triggering some recognition in the mind of her tyrannical husband. After the fierceness of

his original demands, the jinni offers a reasonable accommodation that Shahriyar might do well to emulate. Above all, the jinni's response proves that in this world a good story has value—for supernatural beings as well as ordinary mortals.

These extraordinary events unfold in a realistic social framework defined by the ethos of a merchant culture, and the stories of the old men provide tantalizing glimpses of the social relationships and familial obligations that prevailed when the stories were originally told. The sudden appearance of a jinni in the middle of a perfectly ordinary trader's journey is only one of a series of supernatural elements that blend with these realistic details. In both the frame and the embedded stories, the characters accept that the jinn are part of their world (if largely unseen) and that the spells of a sorceress can transform men and women into animals. There are no firm divisions between the worlds inhabited by humans and jinn. Even the characters with supernatural powers or magical skills demonstrate values and impulses that are universal. All of them feel the pull of jealousy or curiosity and act out of vengeful fury or filial devotion. This mixture of the realistic and the supernatural is one of the distinguishing features of the Nights, *and one of the reasons that it made such a deep impression on Western readers and fed the development of the genre of fantasy literature that continues to flourish today.*

As the Nights *stories made their way into European languages, the prominence of supernatural elements engendered both interest and discomfort. Romanticism was tightly entangled with such new cultural stimuli. Samuel Taylor Coleridge acknowledged that one of his most influential poems, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," was deeply indebted to "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," which featured the sudden appearance of a supernatural element that did not reflect conventional moral imperatives. For Coleridge, the jinni's intervention in the story of the merchant revealed the essential vulnerability of humans to forces that cannot be accommodated within standard notions of right and wrong, crime and punishment. In the first and most radical versions of the "Ancient Mariner," Coleridge responded to "The Merchant and the Jinni" by creating an unsettling narrative in which supernatural beings disrupt conventional notions of cause and effect and simplistic moralizing judgments.*

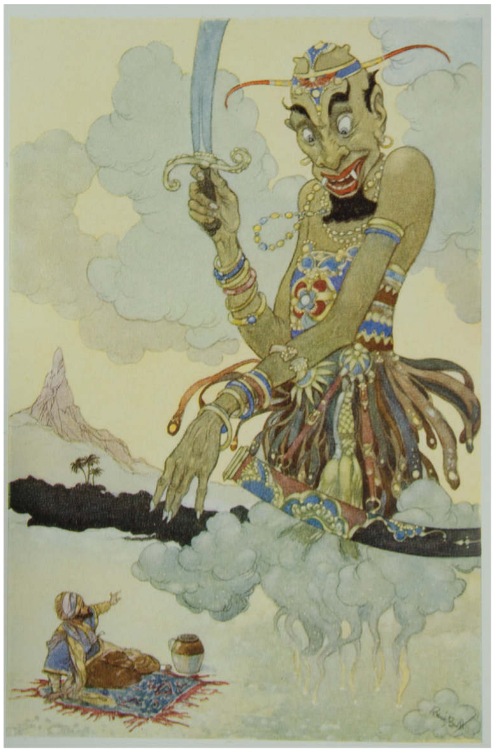
If "The Merchant and the Jinni" is read as part of Shahrazad's efforts to appease her husband's murderous impulses, the tale offers some challenges, given the examples of malice included in its embedded tales. The jealous wife who engineers the murder of her rival in "The Tale of the First Old Man" is joined in evil intent by the third tale's sorceress, who not only commits an adulterous act that parallels the one suffered by Shahriyar but also viciously steals her husband's human form. Other female characters prove to be invaluable allies in rescuing the protagonists and punishing the miscreants appropriately, but this balancing of vice and virtue seems to be a dangerous tactic for a storyteller faced with an unstable listener holding a grudge against women. Critics who adopt a psychological reading of the frame tale suggest that Shahrazad uses these examples as a way of establishing a rapport with a man who has been deeply traumatized—and that this represents only the first stage in a process of leading him back to sanity. There are many more nights of stories to come, and they will include many more examples of female virtue.

THEY SAY, wise and happy king, that there was once a merchant[1] who had wealth in abundance, capital and assets and credit abroad, many slaves and servants, a number of women and a number of children. One day he desired to see another country and set out, took his horse and filled his saddlebag with bread and dates, and for nights and days he rode (God had written that he would be safe), and at the journey's end, my happy king, he saw to his affairs and took the road back home.

He had journeyed for three days when the heat and glare came over him, and as he chanced upon a garden, he took shelter in its shade. There he found a spring under a walnut tree. He tied up his horse and sat beside the water, and from his saddlebag he took some bread and dates, and as he ate the dates, he flung the pits away.

Then he rose and washed and prayed, and the prayer had not left his lips when, in the guise of an old man, a jinni appeared,[2] feet on the ground and head in the clouds and sword in hand. The old man came before him and said, "Stand that I may kill you as you have killed my son." And he let out a roar that filled the merchant with a violent dread.

"What is my crime?" he said.



The jinni appears. Illustration by René Bull from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912). Bull's early career as a cartoonist is evident in this rendering of the fearsome jinni.*

"I want to kill you as you killed my son."

"Who killed your son?"

"You did."

"I swear to God I didn't," said the merchant. "How could I have killed him?"

"Did you not sit down, eat dates, and throw the pits away?"

"I did," the merchant said.

"Then you killed my son," said the jinni. "When he came this way, a date pit struck him in the chest[3] and killed him. Now I must kill you."

"Don't do it," said the merchant.

"I must," said the jinni, "blood for blood."

"If I killed him, it was by mistake: forgive me."

But the jinni replied, "I have to kill the man who killed my son."

He threw the merchant to the ground and raised his sword, and the merchant wept over his wife and children. The sword was lifted higher and the merchant's clothes were wet with tears, and the merchant said, "There is no power and no strength except in God." And he spoke these lines:

Life has two days—peace and menace.
One part happiness, then grief.
To those who hold the blows of fate against us
Ask: does fate help those it does not also test?[4]
Do you not see that storms attack
Only the highest trees?
Earth has many places dry and green
But only those with fruit have stones to fear.
And in the sky are many stars, but none
Suffer eclipses like the moon and sun.
You thought well of the days when they were good
And did not care what fortune had in store.
The nights were still and tricked you into ease
Yet in the calmest night does trouble come.[5]

Again the jinni said, “I must kill you as you killed my son, even if you weep blood.”

“Must you?” said the merchant.

And the jinni said, “I must.”[6]

He raised his sword to strike …

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short, and the king burned to know more, and her sister Dunyazad said, “What a strange and lovely story!”

“What is this,” said Shahrazad, “beside what I could tell you next? If the king will let me live another night, I will tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day. When morning dawned and day broke and the sun put out its rays, the king attended to his kingdom (delighting his vizier) and governed until night, when he went back to his quarters and to bed with Shahrazad. Then Dunyazad said, “Sister, if you are not sleepy, will you tell us a story to while away the night?”

The king said, “Let it be the one about the merchant and the jinni: I want to hear the end.”

And she said, “Happily.”

They say, my wise and happy king, that the merchant said, “Let me go home and say good-bye to family, my children and my wife, divide my property and put someone in charge, then I will return so you may kill me."

"I am afraid," said the jinni, "that if I let you go and give you time, you will not come back."

"I swear," the merchant said. "God is my witness."

And the jinni said, "How long?"

"One year," the merchant said, "to let me see my fill of family, say good-bye to my wife, and see my duties through, then I will return at the new year."

And the jinni said, "Do you swear to God?"

"I do."

The jinni released the man,[7] who mounted his horse and went on his way, heartsick. And when he saw his family at home, he wept without relief, and his family reproached him and his wife said, "What is wrong? Why do you mourn when we rejoice at your return?"

"How could I not," he said, "when I have one year left to live?"

He told her what had happened with the jinni, how he had sworn that they would meet again at the new year so that the jinni could kill him. His family fell to weeping, his wife tearing at her face and hair, daughters keening, sons in tears. It was a day of mourning and they said a sad farewell.[8]

And the merchant in the morning made his wishes known,[9] divided up his property and cleared his debts, gave alms, called reciters to read suras, and then he summoned witnesses and freed his slaves. To the older children he left their share of wealth, appointed guardians for the younger ones, and to his wife he gave what she was due.

The year went by, and when his final journey came, he washed and prayed, took his shroud with him and said good-bye, sons around his neck and daughters in distress, his wife in tears. Their grieving hurt his heart as he embraced them one last time and told them, "Children, this was God's design: all people die."

On his horse, he journeyed day and night until he reached the orchard, and sat where he had sat before and waited for the jinni with a heavy heart and streaming eyes. As he waited, an old man approached with a doe on a chain, greeted him (the merchant greeted back), and said, “Why do you sit alone in a place haunted by jinn?”

The merchant told his tale about the jinni from start to end, and the old man was amazed that he had kept his promise and returned after a year. “I will not leave,” he said, “until I see what happens with the jinni.”

He sat by him to talk, and as they spoke …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Another old man came near with two black dogs and greeted them and asked them how they were. The first old man told him what had happened to the merchant with the jinni, how the merchant promised to return at the new year so that the jinni could kill him, and that he himself had sworn to stay until the end. And the second old man was stunned and swore in turn to stay and see it through.

Just as he sat down, a third old man appeared, greeted them (they greeted back), and asked them why they sat there looking sad. They told him the merchant’s story and said that they were sitting there to wait and see what happened with the jinni. And the third man also vowed to stay until the end.

As they talked, there rose a cloud of dust, which cleared to show the jinni, a steel sword in his hand, who came near without greeting them and picked the merchant out with his left hand and said, “Get up so I may kill you.”

And the merchant and the three old men began to weep …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

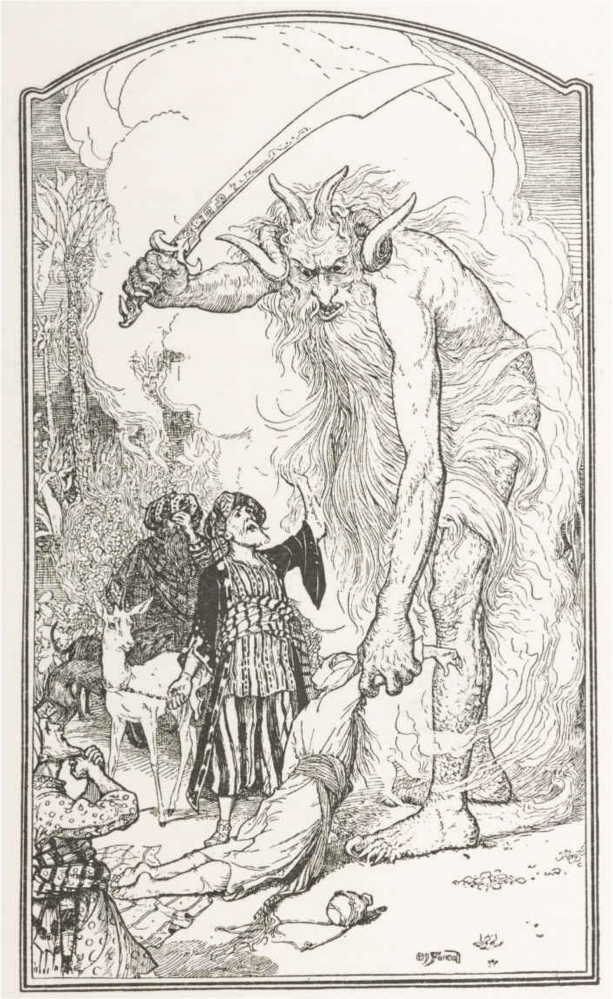
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Then the first old man[10] (with the doe) came forward, kissed the jinni’s hands and feet, and said, “Crown of the kings of the jinn! If I tell you my story with this doe, and you find it amazing, and stranger than your story[11] with the merchant, will you grant me a third of your claim on his blood?”

And the jinni said, “I will.”

So the old man said …



The jinni claims the life of the merchant. Illustration by Henry Justice Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments, *ed. Andrew Lang (1898). Ford illustrated a popular series of fairy-tale books for the children's market in Britain.*

THE TALE OF THE FIRST OLD MAN

JINNI, THIS DOE is my cousin, my own flesh and blood. She was promised to me when I was very young and she was twelve, and she came of age under my roof. For thirty years we lived together but were never blessed with children, and for thirty years I treated her with kindness and with care.

Then I took a lover who bore me a son like a slice of moon, and my wife soon grew jealous of my lover and our son. One day, when the boy was ten, I had to go abroad, and I left my son and lover with my wife (this doe) and disappeared for a whole year.

While I was away, my wife learned the art of magic,[12] cast a spell on my son, and changed him to a calf. She called the shepherd and said, "Put him with the cattle." Then she changed his mother to a cow and gave her to the shepherd.

When, on my return, I asked about my lover and my son, she said, "Your lover died, and your son ran away. I don't know where he is."

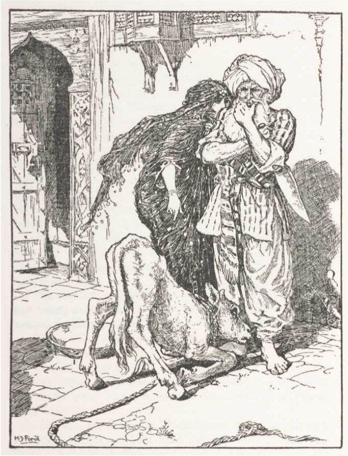
And for a year, my heart was sore with grief, my eyes with tears. When the season came for the Great Feast,[13] I had the shepherd bring me a fat cow for the sacrifice, and he brought me the cow that was my lover, and as I rolled up my sleeves and held the knife to her throat, she moaned and cried, "My son, my son."

Tears ran down her cheeks, and I, amazed and full of pity, turned away, and asked the shepherd for another cow, but my wife said, "Kill her: she is nice and fat, good for the feast."

I came near the cow to cut her throat, and again she cried, "My son, my son," and I could not proceed and had the shepherd butcher her for me.

But the shepherd, when he skinned her, found neither meat nor fat around her bones, and I regretted having had her killed. To the shepherd I said, “Take her for yourself or give the meat as alms, and find me a fat young calf among the flock.”

He took the cow away (I never knew her fate), then he brought me my son, my flesh and blood changed to a calf. And when my son saw me, he broke loose from his rope and ran to me, threw himself at my feet, and rubbed his face against me. I was all amazed and full of mercy, soft with pity, blood cried after blood and sacred ties, and something stirred inside me as I saw him weep and rake the earth, until at last I turned away. To the shepherd I said, “Put him back among the flock, be kind to him, and bring me another.”



The calf begs for its life. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

But my wife shouted, “Butcher this one.”

Angrily, I said, “On your advice I killed the cow for nothing. Now I will spare this calf.”

“You must kill it,” she said.

And I took the knife and bound the calf …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

As I bent to kill my son, he wept and rolled around my feet and motioned with his tongue, and my heart wavered with pity at such a curious sight. I said to my wife, “I will set him free and leave him in your care.”

Then I tried to please my wife (this doe) by slaughtering another calf and promising to kill this one (my son) next season.

And when God’s morning broke, the shepherd came to me and said, “I bring good news. Will you reward me?”

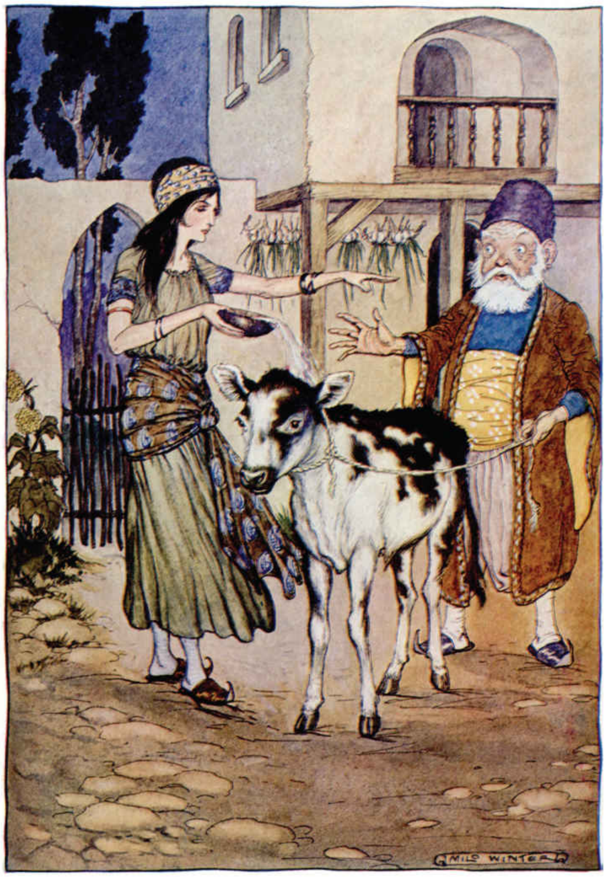
And I said, “I will.”

“I have a daughter,” he said, “who has studied magic[14] and the art of spells, and yesterday when I brought home the calf you spared, my daughter took one look at it and laughed and cried. When I asked her why, she said she laughed because the calf was the son of our master the merchant, put under a spell by the merchant’s wife, and she cried because his father had killed the son’s mother. I could hardly wait till dawn to bring you the good news.”

When I heard this, jinni, I gave a cry and fainted. And when I woke, I trailed the shepherd to his home and threw myself with kisses at my son, who turned his face to mine, cheeks wet with tears and jutting tongue as if to say, “Poor me.”

To the shepherd’s daughter I said, “If you release him from the spell, I will give you all my cows and money.”

She smiled and said, “I have no desire for your cattle or your cash, but I will set him free on two conditions: that you let me marry him, and that you let me cast a spell on his enchanter, or I will not be safe from harm.”



The shepherd's daughter performs her spell. Illustration by Milo Winter, from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1914).*

"Do what you wish and more," I said. "My property and son are yours. As for my wife, who did this to my son and made me kill his mother, her blood is yours to spill."

"No," she said, "but I will let her taste what she has done to others."

Then the shepherd's daughter filled a bowl with water,[15] uttered a spell, and said to my son, "If God made you a calf, stay as you are, but if you are enchanted, return to your first form."

He shook and changed back to a man, and as I fell on him, he told me what my wife (this doe) had done to him and to his mother. And I said, "God has sent us someone to avenge you."

Then I gave my son in marriage to the shepherd's daughter, who turned my wife into this doe and said, "Here is a pretty beast. If she is to keep us company, better that she does not bring bad luck and ugly sights."

She stayed with us for days and nights, months and years. Then one day the shepherd’s daughter died, and my son traveled abroad to the country of this merchant you have met, and I went after him to find what had become of him and brought along my wife (this doe). That is my story. Is it not strange?

* * *

AND THE JINNI SAID, “I grant you a third of this man’s blood.”

Then, King Shahriyar, the second old man (with the two black dogs) said to the jinni, “If I tell you my story with these dogs, and you find it stranger than what you have heard, will you grant me a third of this man’s blood?”

“I will.”

So the old man came forward and said …

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF THE SECOND OLD MAN

JINNI, THESE TWO DOGS are my brothers. Our father died and left us three thousand dinars, and each of us opened a shop. But soon my older brother (this dog here) took his goods, cleared a thousand dinars, and set out to trade abroad.

A full year passed until one day a beggar came by my shop, and when I said, “May God admit you,” he said in tears, “Am I so changed?” And looking at his face, I saw my brother.

I welcomed him in, but when I asked what had so changed him, he said, “Do not ask. I have nothing left.”

I took him to the bath, dressed him in my clothes, and shared my food with him, then I looked over my accounts and found that I had doubled my wealth, so that I was now worth two thousand dinars. I gave my brother half this sum and said, “Pretend you never went away.” He gladly took his share and opened another shop.

Soon my second brother (this other dog) set his heart on travel in his turn. We tried to talk him out of it, but he stood firm and joined a group of traders and was gone for a full year. But he returned just like his older brother.

“Brother,” I said, “did I not warn you not to go?”

“Such is fate,” he said. “Now I have nothing.”[16]

And, jinni, I took him to the bath, clothed and fed him. Then I said, “Brother, I shall do my accounts, see what I have earned this year, and set aside the capital. Any profit I have made I’ll share with you.”

I checked my books and found I had two thousand dinars of profit, and, praising God, I split the gain and gave a thousand to my brother, who opened another shop.

After we had lived together for a while, my brothers again wished to trade abroad and take me with them, but I said, “What did you gain from travel that I should hope to gain?”

The matter ended there, and we stayed in our shops, buying and selling. And every year they pressed me again and every year I refused until six years had passed, when I gave in and said, “Brothers, I am ready. Let us see how much we have.”

I found that they had squandered all their wealth on food and drink, but I said nothing. I sold my goods and found I had six thousand dinars to my name, which I split in half and said, “Three thousand is for us to use on our travels. The other three thousand I shall bury in the ground, in case what happened to you happens again, so that on our return we will have three thousand dinars to open our shops.”

And they said, “Good idea.”

Then, jinni, I buried the three thousand and split the rest among us, and we bought merchandise, rented a ship, and filled it with our goods and put to sea …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

For a month, we sailed the salty sea until we reached a port, where we docked and sold our goods, and every coin earned us ten more. As we prepared to leave, on the shore I met a woman dressed in rags, who kissed my hands and said, “Will you do me a favor and trust I will reward you?”

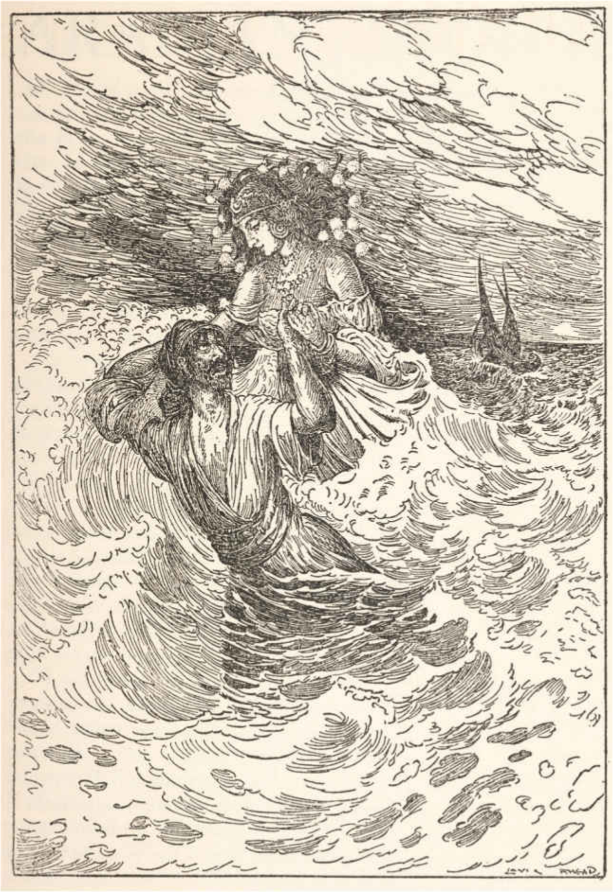
And I said, “I will help you regardless of reward.”

“Marry me,” she said, “and dress me, take me in the boat with you back to your country, let me be your wife and give myself to you. Be kind to me and you will be repaid. Do not be fooled by how I look.”

My heart went soft for her and I said yes, dressed her in fine clothes, and married her. Then I took her to the boat, spread the bed, and gave her my attention.

We sailed for many nights and days, and as I spent the days and nights with her, I fell in love. I forgot my brothers, who grew jealous, envied my prosperity, and fixed their eyes on what was mine. And they conspired to kill me, and the devil made them think that this was fair. One night as I slept beside my wife, they picked us up and threw us into the sea. My wife was woken from her sleep, changed to a jinni, and bore me away to an island.

In the morning, she said, “It is I, your wife, who saved you from drowning, for I am one of the jinn who believe in God,[17] and when I saw you by the sea, I loved you and came to you disguised. Now I must kill your brothers.”



“My wife changed to a jinni and bore me away.” Illustration by Louis Rhead from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(New York, 1923). Rhead was a successful American poster artist in the 1890s before turning to book illustration.*

I thanked her in a daze and said, “But as for murdering my brothers, it is not what I want. I am not like them.”

And I told her our whole story, first to last, but this only fed her anger.

“I will fly to them tonight,” she said, “and sink their boats and let them drown.”

“For God’s sake, don’t,” I said. “Leave evil to the evildoers. After all, they are my brothers.”

When I had calmed her anger, she carried me away and set me down on the roof of my house. I dug up the money I had buried, greeted my neighbors in the market, and opened up my shop.

And when it was night, I came home to find these two dogs tied up, and at my sight they rose and rubbed themselves against me, weeping. Then my wife appeared and said, “These are your brothers.”[18]

"Who did this to them?"

"I sent my sister," she said, "who changed them to this form. They will not change back before ten years have passed."

Then she told me where to find her and departed. Now ten years have passed, and I was on my way to her to have the spell lifted when I met this man. On learning what awaited him, I promised not to leave him until you returned. This is my story. Is it not amazing?

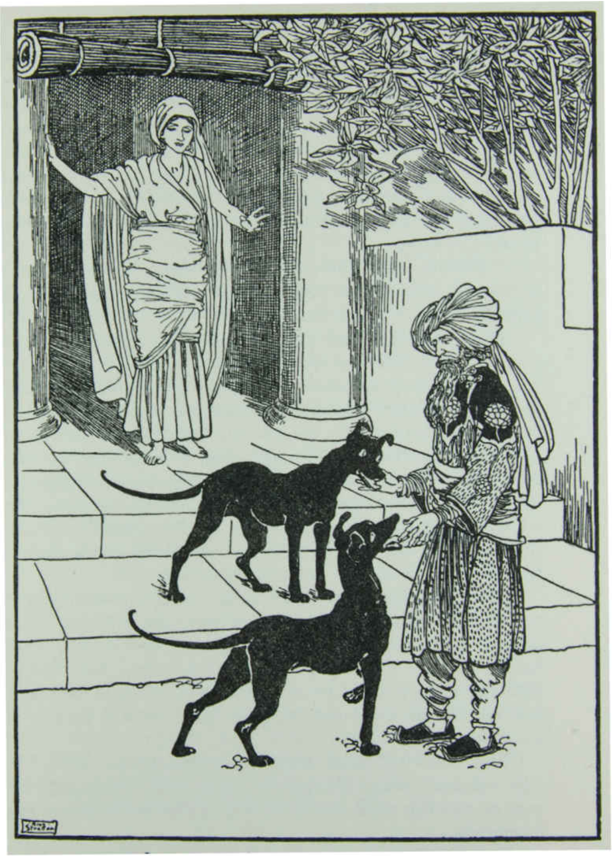
* * *

"IT IS VERY STRANGE," said the jinni. "I grant you a third of my claim on his blood."

Then the third old man said, "Jinni, don't break my heart. If I tell you a story stranger than the first two, will you grant me a third of your claim on his life?"

"I will," said the jinni.

And the old man said, "Listen."



“I came home to find these two dogs.” British illustrator Helen Stratton was best known for her art nouveau–inspired black-and-white illustrations. From The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (London, 1912).*

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“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF THE THIRD OLD MAN[19]

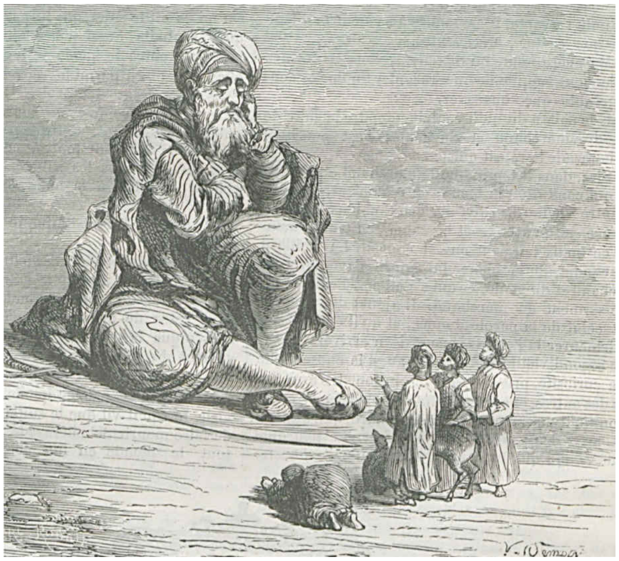
LORD AND SULTAN of the jinn, this mule was my wife. Some time ago, after I had been abroad for a whole year, I returned to find my wife in bed with a slave, talking and flirting and laughing and kissing. And at my sight, she rose and took a cup of water, spoke over it, threw it at my face, changed me to a dog,[20] and chased me from the house. I took refuge in a butcher’s shop and nibbled at the bones. The butcher brought me home, and his daughter took one look at me and hid her face and said, “Why have you let a strange man in?”

“What man?” her father said.

“This dog is under a woman’s spell,” she said, “but I can break it.”

“For God’s sake,” said her father, “break it.”

She took a cup of water, spoke over it, and threw it at my face, and said, “Return to your first form!”



The jinni listens to the third old man’s tale. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

And I changed back, and kissed her hands and said, “Please cast a spell over my wife who did this.”

She gave me a little of her water. “When you see her sleeping,” she said, “splash this water over her and she will change to what you wish.”

When I saw her sleeping, I splashed the water over her and said, “Leave this form for the form of a mule!”

And she became the mule you see with your own eyes, Lord and sultan of the jinn.

* * *

THE JINNI shook with delight[21] and gave him a third of his claim, and having no more claim on the merchant’s life, he left.

The merchant thanked the three old men, and they gave him their good wishes for his safety. Then each went on his way. The merchant went to his family and lived with them until the day he died.

◆

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short, and the king burned to know more, and her sister Dunyazad said, “What a strange and lovely story!”

“But this,” said Shahrazad, “is not as strange or as amazing as the story of the fisherman.”
“What is it?” asked the king.
And she told him the story …

Shahriyar (Assaad Bouab) listens to Shahrazad’s tale. Tim Supple’s stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights, *in performance at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Photo by Sophie Austin.*

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1. *there was once a merchant: One Thousand and One Nights* reflects the values of an urban, mercantile society, and merchants are the most frequent protagonists in the stories. While other story collections in world literature are classified as “mirrors for princes,” Aboubakr Chraïbi argues that the *Nights* serves as a “mirror for merchants,” offering lessons for a merchant class.

2. *in the guise of an old man, a jinni appeared:* The jinn are creatures of flame and normally invisible to humans, but medieval Arab audiences accepted that they could inhabit the many dimensions of the physical world. Jinn are shape-shifters and can appear in a wide variety of physical forms. In the *Nights*, the jinn add an element of narrative unpredictability to the stories in which they appear. Marina Warner suggests that they reflect the storyteller’s need to incorporate “intermediate agents” that could act as exemplars of either good or evil—“an answer to the problem of evil existing in the monotheistic landscape, when a good, all-powerful deity allows terrible things to happen” (p. 45).

3. *“a date pit struck him in the chest”:* Despite the apparent implausibility of such an event, Duncan B. MacDonald argued in 1919 that a jinni was a creature of fire whose very thin skin could be pierced easily by a well-thrown object. In his translation of the *Nights*, Edward Lane claimed that the merchant was “culpably careless” because he did not follow common practices intended to prevent angering invisible jinn in places where they are believed to reside—for instance, baths, wells, latrines, ruined houses, marketplaces, the sea, or road junctions. Before throwing the date pits, “he should have asked permission by using the exclamation ‘Destoor!’” (vol. 1, p. 52, n. 4).

4. *“does fate help those it does not also test?”:* In *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, Robert Irwin writes, “Fate is a leading character in the *Nights*.” A belief in fate, understood as the will of an omnipotent God, was prevalent in Muslim society and permeates the stories. It often operates to push the plot in unexpected directions—testing the characters and rewarding or punishing them in accordance with its unexpected dictates. In some cases, characters simply bow to the inevitable, but, as Irwin argues, trying to avoid fate makes a better story (pp. 197–98).

5. *“Yet in the calmest night does trouble come”:* The interpolated poetry of the original story is included in this translation when it is thematically important. Yasmine Seale has opted here for a simpler, modern idiom that captures both the earthy simplicity and the rhythmic quality of the original.

6. *“I must”:* For Dickens, the demand of the “obdurate old Genie” for blood operated as an easily recognizable emblem of injustice for his Victorian readers. In 1844, he used this image in a speech condemning a social system that responded to criminality among the poor with harsh punishment rather than addressing its true causes: “I hold that for any fabric of society to go on day after day, and year after year, from father to son, and from grandfather to grandson, unceasingly punishing men for not engaging in the pursuit of virtue and for the practice of crime, without showing them the way to virtue, has no foundation in justice, has no foundation in religion, has no foundation in truth, and has only one parallel in fiction that I know of,—which is the case of an obdurate old Genie, in the *Arabian Nights*, who was bent on taking the life of a certain merchant, because he had struck out the eye of his invisible son” (Slater, p. 139).

7. *The jinni released the man:* In the *Nights*, jinn exist in close proximity to the human world and are familiar with the codes of behavior that govern Muslim life. In this story the jinni acknowledges the merchant’s responsibilities to his family.

8. *a sad farewell:* A year in advance, a sad farewell as an anticipation of grief.

9. *made his wishes known:* As in the tale told by the vizier to Shahrazad, the merchant prepares for his death by making sure his property is distributed to his children and his debts are paid. He also completes a series of religious duties, including recitations of chapters (suras) from the Qur’an and the freeing of his slaves.

10. *Then the first old man:* The old man is not there to defend the merchant from an accusation of guilt. Novelist Paul Auster explains that trying to reason with the jinni and argue the facts of law would not change the jinni’s mind. The old man’s goal is to tell a story and so to turn the jinni “away from the facts, turn him away from thoughts of death, and in so doing delight him … into a new feeling for life, which in turn will make him renounce his obsession with killing the merchant” (*The Invention of Solitude*, p. 150).

11. *“you find it amazing, and stranger than your story”:* As the first of Shahrazad’s stories, “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni” establishes the model for tales of wonder (or *ajaʾib*) within the *Nights*. The old man declares that he will tell a tale that is stranger and more amazing than even a story in which a merchant faces death after accidentally killing an invisible jinni child. The plot will ultimately be determined by the ability of three storytellers to so amaze and astonish the jinni that he will relinquish his claim on the merchant’s life. The origins of this story might be traced to the pre-Islamic story of Khurafa, who is kidnapped by jinn and similarly redeemed by amazing stories (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, pp. 616–17).

12. *“my wife learned the art of magic”:* This is the first appearance of the sorceress who represents one of the most powerful prototypes of evil in the collection. The Islamic world did not exhibit the same obsessive fear of witches as medieval Christian lands, but in this case the combination of magical skill and sexual jealousy establishes a threatening extreme that recurs in other core stories of the *Nights*. The possibility of such transformations was attested to by one of Edward Lane’s informants in early nineteenth-century Cairo. He reported that a man in Cairo disappeared and his brother found in his place an ass that displayed “a sagacity singularly opposed to the proverbial dulness of the generality of his species.” One day an old woman saw the ass and quickly covered her face, for she knew, through her magic skills, that this was a man rather than an animal (vol. 1, p. 58, n. 15).

13. *When the season came for the Great Feast:* The Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice, or Eid al-Adha, commemorates the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael) in obedience to God’s command. At the last moment, the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) intervenes to prevent the slaughter of Ismael and then provides a sheep to be sacrificed instead. During the Islamic festival, an animal (a sheep or a goat) is sacrificed and typically one-third of the meat is consumed by the family. The rest is offered as alms to the poor.

14. *“who has studied magic”:* From his vantage point in early nineteenth-century Cairo, Edward Lane asserted that a belief in magic was widespread and magic was used for a variety of purposes: to discover hidden treasures, to acquire knowledge of the future, to ensure fertility, to spark love, to cure illness, to guard against the influence of the evil eye, or to attack an enemy or rival. If practiced for acceptable goals and without invoking the agency of the devil or evil jinn, magic was normally considered morally acceptable (vol. 1, pp. 58–59, n. 15). In this case, the clever shepherd’s daughter deploys magic to right a wrong and deliver poetic justice. In providing a foil for the malicious sorceress, she complicates the image of women presented in this first story of Shahrazad.

15. *Then the shepherd’s daughter filled a bowl with water:* Edward Lane reported that in Cairo metamorphoses were achieved either by invoking a jinni or by using a spell, a process that involved sprinkling water or dust on the object that was to be transformed. In the case of the Cairene man who had been transformed into an ass, a disenchantment spell was enacted by an old woman with skill in magic: “Having collected a number of herbs, she boiled them in a large vessel; and when the decoction had cooled, she took the vessel, and, muttering a certain spell, threw its contents over the animal.” The spell was a success, except for one foot that was missed by the magician’s mixture (vol. 1, p. 58, n. 15).

16. *“Now I have nothing”:* The fluctuation in the fortunes of merchants is one of the most common motifs in *One Thousand and One Nights*. The changes are often driven by the vicissitudes of fate, although the squandering of an inheritance is a frequent plot device in the stories. The positive and negative examples provided by the brothers in this embedded story are examples of why Aboubakr Chraïbi calls the *Nights* “a mirror for merchants.”

17. *“I am one of the jinn who believe in God”:* The jinniya has taken a female human form and easily slips into human society, for she is one of the jinn who observe the laws of Islam. Her marriage to a human is not particularly surprising in the context of the *Nights*. The idea that humans and jinn could enter into romantic relationships, and even marry, was accepted in the medieval Islamic world. There were even legal treatises dealing with issues such as property

rights in such “mixed marriages.” In his translation of the *Nights*, Edward Lane includes an anecdote related to him by a Persian acquaintance in Cairo who knew someone of “indubitable veracity” who, when watching young women bathing in the Ganges one evening, beheld one so lovely that he wanted to take her as a wife. At nightfall, she came to him and consented, on the condition that he never take another wife. Another evening, he was tempted by a beautiful woman, but it turned out to be his jinniya wife testing his fidelity (vol. 1, p. 67, n. 25).

18. *“These are your brothers”:* The transformation motif is common in the stories of the *Nights*, and some critics have seen it as evidence of Indian or Greek influence. These stories of transformation might be considered particularly well suited for entertaining a jinni listener, for he is himself a shape-shifter.

19. *The Tale of the Third Old Man:* This third tale is not included in the Arabic manuscript translated into French by Antoine Galland, but it was included in other Arabic editions of *One Thousand and One Nights* prepared in the nineteenth century. It offers an example of how motifs were repeated to produce additional stories in a pattern characteristic of the development of the corpus of the *Nights*.

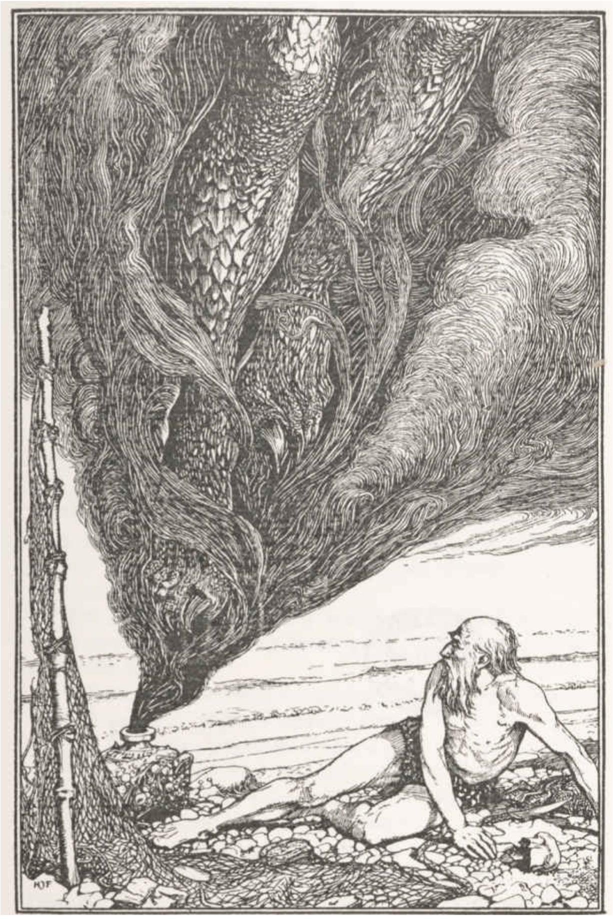
20. *changed me to a dog:* The obvious parallel between the wife in this embedded story and the queen’s betrayal of Shahriyar in the opening frame of the *Nights* makes it a strange choice for Shahrazad if her aim is to distract and appease her wounded husband. Perhaps Shahrazad’s goal is to show that other men have suffered similar insults, thereby producing the kind of relief the two kings experience in the opening story after their encounter with the jinni’s bride. In interpretations that apply a therapeutic model to Shahrazad’s efforts, these stories are seen as the first stage in a long-term project intended to sensitize the king to the damage he has suffered and to offer him opportunities to work through his trauma to develop a stable, integrated personality.

21. *The jinni shook with delight:* The jinn resemble humans in their ability to appreciate the value of a marvelous tale. Mia Gerhardt suggests that the terms of this ransom tale are ultimately rooted in the values of early Islamic society, where storytelling was an important source of entertainment and a fundamental way of asserting one’s status as a civilized being. The ability of the three storytellers to entrance the jinni listener represents the superiority of human abilities: “Jinn may be stronger than men and often redoubtable, but men’s words charm them, men’s lives are more interesting than theirs” (p. 404). Ferial Ghazoul sees the exchange of stories as metonymic, as the old men sacrifice the intimate stories of their lives as a substitute for the sacrifice of the life of the merchant (p. 85).

THE STORY OF THE FISHERMAN AND THE JINNI

Like the first story told by Shahrazad, "The Fisherman and the Jinni" begins with the sudden eruption of the supernatural in the form of a menacing jinni and then unfolds as a series of interlocking tales. In this story, however, tales are told not to ransom a life but rather to instruct the listener on the consequences of rash acts of violence, which the narrator claims will always lead to regret. In its present form, this story is really two tales that appear to have been linked rather mechanically by an early scribe. The first focuses on the fisherman's effort to evade the threats of the jinni and the second focuses on lifting the curse of the enchanted prince of the Black Isles. There is a formal unity between the two parts—sustained by the presence of the fisherman—and they both impart the message that mistreating one's benefactors or close companions will lead to harm. Beyond this, each part of the story develops its own distinct themes.

The opening tale of "The Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni" celebrates the power of storytelling as an extension of the human capacity for reason and a weapon against rash and malicious actions. As in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," the raw emotions of the jinni are contrasted with the cleverness of the storyteller, who not only uses teaching stories to persuade the vicious jinni to resist his irrational impulses but also employs a classic ruse to trap him in his vessel once more. This celebration of intelligence as a weapon against tyrannical *violence is extended into the embedded "Tale of King Yunan and the Wise Duban," where the clever Duban is able to strike the last blow against his unjust executioner. The parallels to Shahrazad's predicament are obvious: There is still hope for a storyteller who can draw on her store of knowledge to teach a critical lesson to a king, but the danger to her life cannot be dismissed.*



The smoke turned into a jinni. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

The first part of this story, stripped of the more disturbing violence of "The Tale of the Enchanted Prince," has frequently been part of versions of the Arabian Nights *created for children. Bruno Bettelheim, who adopts a psychoanalytical lens in interpreting such children's tales, argues that "The Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni" is a remarkably effective use of the classic motif of a powerful giant in conflict with a weaker adversary.*

While such tales are plentiful in world folklore, Bettelheim argues that this version is superior to others because it demonstrates the fisherman's resilience in the face of repeated defeat (as he casts his net four times) and because the jinni's unexpected response to rescue captures the emotions of a child who has been denied. The jinni's desire for revenge on his rescuer might appear on the surface to be improbable, but Bettelheim argues that it accurately reflects a child's immature response to a situation of denial as he slowly fantasizes about the revenge he will take once the opportunity appears. For Bettelheim, such uncomfortable psychological truths are best presented to children in the form of a story in which they can identify with the emotions expressed by the characters and find a way to manage the contradictory impulses represented by them.

"The Tale of the Enchanted Prince" takes the reader deeper into a realm of uncontrollable desire and violence. In this respect, it looks toward the genre of horror rather than reflecting the logic of the first fairy tale. The sorceress in this story might be compared with the wicked wives in the embedded tales of "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," but she offers a more extreme demonstration of the evils of magic in the hands of a perfidious woman. In her study of the tale, Marina Warner asks whether Shahrazad is attempting to win Shahriyar's trust by providing examples that confirm his worst assumptions about women as a first step in a storytelling strategy that will eventually introduce him to examples of admirable and loving female characters. But the reader might feel that Shahrazad is playing a very dangerous game.

THE STORY GOES, my happy king, that there was a fisherman—very old, with a wife and three daughters, and not even enough money saved for a day’s food—whose custom it was to cast his net four times a day. One morning at the call to prayer (the moon was up), he left the city for the sea, set down his basket and rolled up his shirt. Entering the water to his waist, he cast the net and let it sink. He tugged, and line by line he drew the net toward him, found it heavy, pulled, and found he could not haul it up. So he came back to shore, drove a stake into the earth, and tied the rope to it. Then he left his clothes and dove into the sea.

He went around the net and worked at it until he dragged it out, delighted. When the net was on dry land, he dressed again and opened it. Inside he found a donkey, dead, whose weight had torn the mesh, and his heart sank. With his lips he said, “There is no power and no might except in God,” and in his mind he said, “This catch is strange,” and spoke these lines:

Divers into danger and dark night
Go slow: reward is not in work.
Have you not seen the fisherman
Who stalks his prize under a web of stars
And wades in deep against the waves
Eyes on the net, then home with the night’s haul
A deadly hook inside the fish’s cheek
And sells it to a man who spends the night
Asleep, safe from the cold, in clover?
Glory to the Lord who blesses and withholds:
One casts the line, the other eats the sole.[1]

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

When the fisherman had said these lines, he shook the donkey from the net and sat to mend it. Then he wrung it out and spread it, rose and walked into the sea and said the name of God, and cast the net and let it sink. He tugged, and line by line he pulled and found it snagged more than before, and he thought, "Fish!" and joy rushed to his heart.

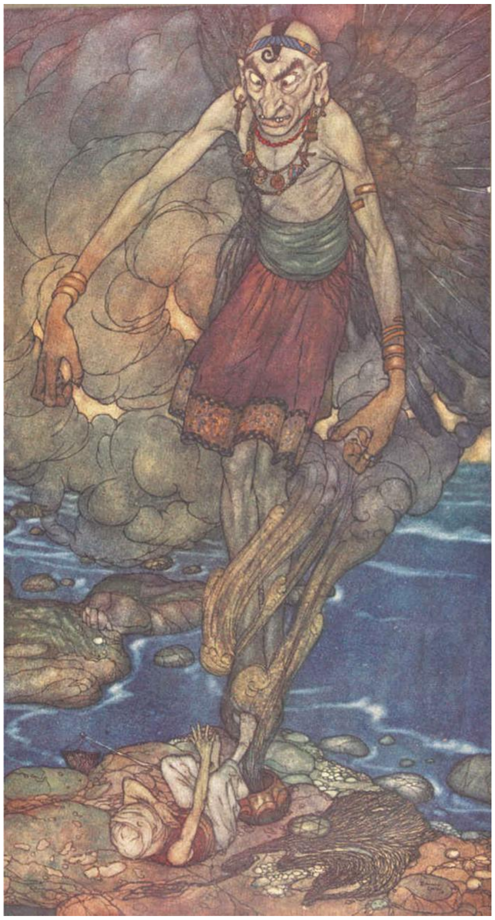
He shed his clothes and dove into the water, grappled with the net until he freed it, and heaved it to the shore. But in the net was a large water jar, heavy with sand and mud, and his heart broke. "This day is strange," he said. "We are God's and to God we return." And he recited:

Time's agony—a truce!
If no truce, amnesty!
I went to seek my daily bread
And found it dead
And neither craft nor luck
Will bring it back
How many fools in luxury
And sages in the dark!

Then he threw the jar away and washed the net and wrung it out and spread it. He asked his Lord for mercy, went back to the water, cast the net a third time,[2] let it sink, and when he pulled it up, he found inside a mess of stones and bones and broken glass. He wept at his bad luck and said:

The shape of your life is not up to you[3]
And neither pen nor ink will keep you fed
Success and sustenance are yours by lot:
Some lands are evergreen, some dry as dust

The wheel of fortune fells the finer man
And lifts the lower who deserved to fall
Come then, death: life is grim
When falcons tread the earth and ducks soar high
No wonder that you see the good man poor
While the inglorious oaf struts in his kingdom
Our wages are allotted, and our fate
To glean our food as birds in every place
Some wheel around the earth from east to west
While others get the choicest cuts at rest



"Then the smoke gathered and swirled and turned into a jinni." Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907). Dulac's rich images of the* 1001 Nights *shaped popular perceptions of the stories and exerted a strong influence on other illustrators.*

The fisherman raised his eyes to heaven, saw that dawn had broken and the sun had risen and the day begun. “Oh Lord,” he said, “you know I cast my net only four times, and I have cast it three times now, and one remains.”

He begged his Lord to let the sea serve him as it had served Moses.[4] Then he mended the net and threw it out once more and let it sink. When he could not draw it up, he knew that it was snagged on the sea floor. “There is no power and no strength,” he said, “except in God.”

He left his clothes, dove in, and struggled at the net until he freed it, brought it back to shore and felt a heavy thing inside and pried it open. There he found a jar of yellow brass, its mouth stoppered with lead bearing a seal ring’s mark.[5] The fisherman was glad and said, “I’ll sell this in the copper market. It must be worth at least two measures of wheat.”

But as it was too full to move and sealed with lead, he thought to empty it and roll it on its side. And from his belt he took a knife, worked the blade into the plug till it came loose, held the plug between his teeth, and tipped the jar to the earth and shook it to pour out what was inside. But nothing fell from it, and the man wondered.

Soon a thick column of smoke came from the jar, rose and spread over the earth, and swelled until it carpeted the sea and reached the sky and dimmed the day. Then the smoke gathered and swirled and turned into a jinni,[6] feet on the earth and head in the clouds, a face like a wolf and fangs like claws, a cave of a mouth and shards for teeth, trumpet nostrils, buckler ears, a street of a throat and lantern eyes. To be brief, a monster and a beast.

The fisherman shuddered, his jaws locked, his mouth went dry. “Solomon, prophet of God,” the jinni said, “mercy![7] Mercy! Never again will I defy your words or disobey your orders….”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

“What is this?” said the fisherman. “The prophet has been dead for eighteen hundred years, and we are at the end of time. But tell me, what is your story, and how did you come to be inside this jar?”

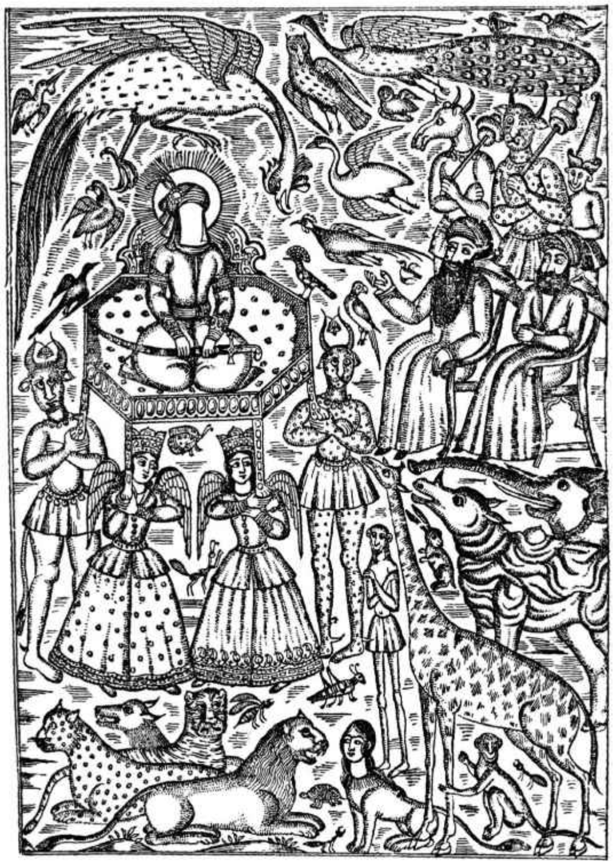
“Be glad!” said the jinni.

“Oh happy day!”

“Be glad that you will soon be put to death.”

“Shame,” said the fisherman. “Why would you kill me, who saved you from the sea and brought you back to earth?”

And the jinni said, “Make a wish.”[8]



Solomon is given dominion over all the creatures of the earth and the air. From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of the Nights, *illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

“What should I wish?”

“Tell me how you wish to die and I shall kill you that way.”

“What is my crime? Is this my reward for saving you?”

“Listen to my story,” said the jinni.

“Make it short,” said the fisherman. “My soul is at my feet.”

“Know,” said the jinni, “that I am one of the rebellious jinn,[9] and I rebelled (the rebel Sakhr and I) against Solomon, prophet of God, son of David, who sent against me Asif, son of Barkhiya, who took me by force, pronounced me guilty, and led me in defeat to Solomon. When Solomon saw me, he sought refuge in God and told me to submit to his command, but I refused. So he sent for this brass jar and locked me up inside, and sealed the mouth with lead and stamped on it the name of God. Then he had the other jinn throw me into the sea.

“There I stayed for two hundred years and thought, ‘To whoever saves me I will grant eternal wealth.’ Two hundred years went by and no one came, then two hundred more. I thought, ‘To whoever saves me I will open up the treasures of the earth.’ But four hundred years went by and no one came. When I entered the next hundred years, I thought, ‘Whoever saves me in these hundred years I will make sultan, and myself his slave, and grant him three desires every day.’ But those hundred years went by, and all the other years, and no one came to save me. So I raged and roared and spat[10] and snorted and I thought, ‘Whoever saves me now, I will kill in the worst way, or let him choose the manner of his death,’ and that is when you came and set me free, so tell me how you wish to die.”

“I am God’s,” said the fisherman, “and to God I return. Just my luck I did not find you sooner! Spare my life and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed.”[11]

“I have to kill you,” said the jinni. “Tell me how you wish to die.”

The fisherman, sure that his end was near, said through tears, “May God not part me from my children.”

And he begged the jinni, “Save me as I saved you!”

“Your death is your reward for saving me.”

“I did you a kindness,” said the fisherman, “and you reward me with spite! The proverb does not lie:

In thanks for generosity they gave
Its contrary: depraved
Behavior.
Those who serve the undeserving
Come to the same end as he
Who treated a hyena
Tenderly.

“Be brief,” said the jinni, “I have to kill you.”

Then the fisherman said to himself, “This is only a jinni, while I am a human, and God gave me reason.[12] He has only his jinni ways, but I have my head.”

And to the jinni he said, “Must you kill me?”

“I must.”

“By the Almighty name carved on the seal of Solomon, if I ask you a question, will you tell me the truth?”

The jinni shuddered at the name and said, “Be brief.”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The fisherman said, “Were you really in the jar?”

“By the Almighty name, I was.”

“You lie,” said the fisherman. “This jar is too small even for your hands and feet. How could it contain you?”

“I was in it,” said the jinni. “Do you not believe I was inside?”

“I don’t,” said the fisherman.

Then the jinni convulsed and turned to smoke, swelled and spread over the sea and carpeted the earth and coiled, wisp by wisp, into the jar. When the smoke had disappeared, a cry came from within. “Fisherman! I am inside: do you believe me now?”[13]

The fisherman moved fast. He seized the stopper, stuffed it into the mouth of the jar, and said, “Now, jinni, tell me how you wish to die. I will throw you to the waves and build a house on this spot. If a fisherman should come, I shall warn him against fishing here and tell him of the jinni who plans to kill whoever pulls him out.”

The jinni tried to get out, but Solomon’s seal stopped him, and he knew the fisherman had tricked him.

“Fisherman!” he said. “Don’t do it. I was only joking.”

“You lie,” said the fisherman. “You are the lowest and the meanest of the jinn.”

And he began to roll the jar toward the sea.

“No! No!” cried the jinni.

“Yes! Yes!” the fisherman said.

Then, in a softer voice, submissive, the jinni said, “What will you do to me?”

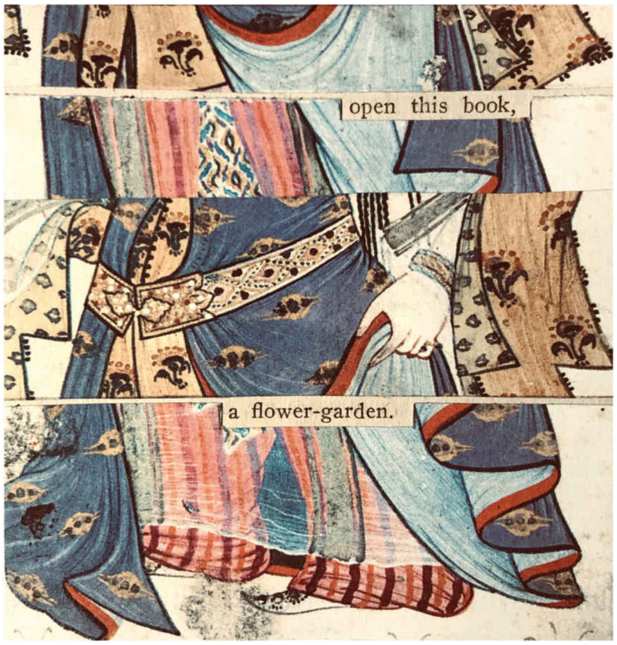
“I will throw you to the sea. You have had a taste of it for eighteen hundred years, and now you shall stay there until doomsday. Did I not say, ‘Spare me, and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed?’ But you would not listen, bent on my destruction, and now it is my turn to bury you.”

“Open the jar,” said the jinni, “and I shall make you rich.”

“You lie, you lie,” said the fisherman. “You and I are like King Yunan and the Wise Duban.”[14]

“What is their story?”

And the fisherman said …



Erasure poem by Yasmine Seale, based on Lane's translation of the Nights.

THE TALE OF KING YUNAN AND THE WISE DUBAN

KNOW, JINNI, that there was in a city of Persia, in the land of Zuman, a king named Yunan who suffered from leprosy, and whom the doctors and the sages could not cure, though they plied him with potions and rubbed him with balms. One day, there came to the city a wise man named Duban, a doctor who had read all sorts of books,[15] Greek and Persian and Arabic and Latin and Syriac and Hebrew, and had studied the learning they contained and the principles they rested on, and had tried their theories and their uses. He knew about the properties of plants and herbs, the harmful and the healthy, and he knew philosophy and all the sciences.

It was days into his stay when wise Duban heard talk of King Yunan and the disease no doctor could cure. When God's morning broke, he put on his best clothes and went to see the king. He introduced himself and said, "I hear, Majesty, of the sickness in your body and the failure of your scholars, and I have come to treat you, but not a drop shall pass your lips nor touch your skin.”

“If you heal me,” said the king, “your children’s children will be rich and I will give you favors, and you will sit with me and share my table.”[16]

And the king gave him robes of honor and was kind.

Then the king said, “Can you really cure me without drugs or balm?”

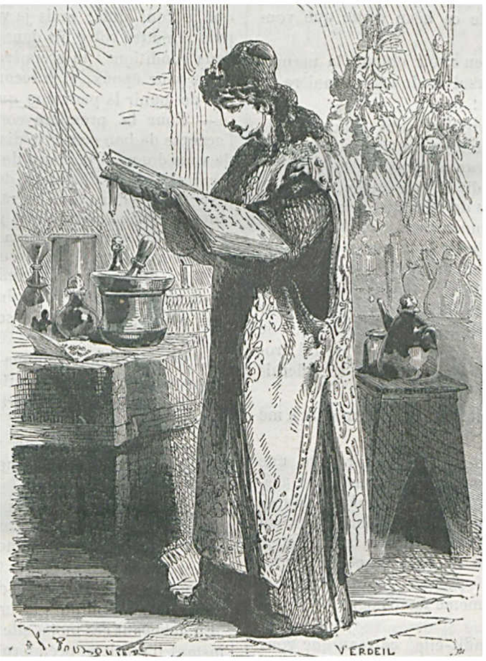
“I will cure you,” said the doctor, “from a distance.”

The king was astonished, and in his heart was love and awe for the wise man.

“Be quick,” he said, “and do what you have promised.”

The doctor said, “I will.”

He went into the city, where he took a house, unpacked his medicines, and set about distilling cures. He fashioned a mallet,[17] hollowed it, and filled the handle (hollow too) with balms and remedies, and he made the mallet excellently, and he also carved a ball with perfect skill. When all this was done, he waited until morning, went to see the king, and kissed the ground before him …



The wise Duban. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

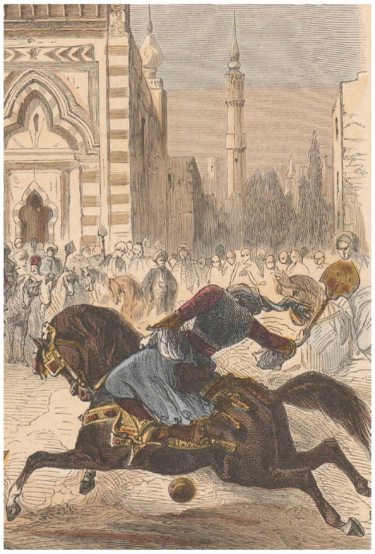
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The wise Duban proposed they ride out to the racecourse for a game.[18] With his lords and princes and viziers, the king rode out. When they took their seats, the doctor offered him the mallet and said, “Take this mallet, grip it tightly in your palm, and race around the field striking the ball. When you sweat, the remedy will seep into your palms and permeate your body, and when you have sweated enough and taken in the cure, go home and have a bath and sleep. You will wake up cured.”

King Yunan, mallet in hand, mounted his horse, and when the ball was thrown, he galloped after it and struck it hard, the handle still in his grasp. He rode without relief until his palms began to sweat, and his body drank the medicine in the handle, and it began to flow inside his frame. When the doctor knew the drug had entered the king’s body, he sent him home and to the bath. And when the king had washed with care, he dressed and went back to his palace and to sleep.

As for the wise Duban, he spent the night at home, and early the next day he asked to see the king. When he was admitted, he went in and kissed the ground before him, and the king rose and embraced him. He seated the doctor beside him and gave him his attention, smiles and honor and all sorts of gifts, for when the king looked at his body after the bath, he found no trace of leprosy,[19] and his skin was clear as silver. He was pleased and breathed more easily. In the morning, the king returned to his diwan[20] and took his seat, surrounded by attendants and viziers. When the wise Duban appeared, the king stood to embrace him, and seated him beside him, and, like friends, they drank and ate together …



King Yunan rode out with the mallet in his hand. Illustration from Les mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *by Madame Doudet (Paris, 1884). This edition of the* Nights *added color to familiar illustrations from other editions in order to appeal to young readers.*

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

When night fell, the king gave the doctor a thousand dinars and sent him home. He marveled at the doctor’s skill and thought: “He cured me from a distance (no drinking and no rubbing) and for his skill he must have every honor and reward. He will share my table, have my ear and be my friend.”

The king passed the night delighting in his body, healed and healthy. And when morning came and it was light, the king returned to his diwan and from his throne called for the doctor. When the doctor came and kissed the ground before him, the king stood up to greet him, seated the doctor beside him and let him share his food, and held him close and showered him with gifts. They kept up their conversation until evening, when the doctor was sent home (another thousand dinars in his pocket) and with his wife he spent the night, pleased and full of thanks for what the king had given him.

When day broke again, the king went back to his diwan, surrounded by his princes and attendants and viziers. One of these viziers was mean and sour and full of hate, and when he saw the doctor had found favor with the king, and saw the wealth and standing he had gained, he feared that he would be dismissed, replaced, and he resented him and wished him harm (envy touches every man).[21]

This vizier approached the king, kissed the ground before him, and said, “Majesty, our great and noble king, I grew up in the fold of your favor and grace and I come to you now with advice. If I hid it, I would be remiss, but command me to reveal it and I will.”

The king, annoyed, said, “What advice?”

“Heed the consequences or see fortune turn against you. Your Majesty has strayed in lending your ear to your enemy, in taking for your confidant and showering with gifts a man come to destroy you. I fear that he will do you harm.”

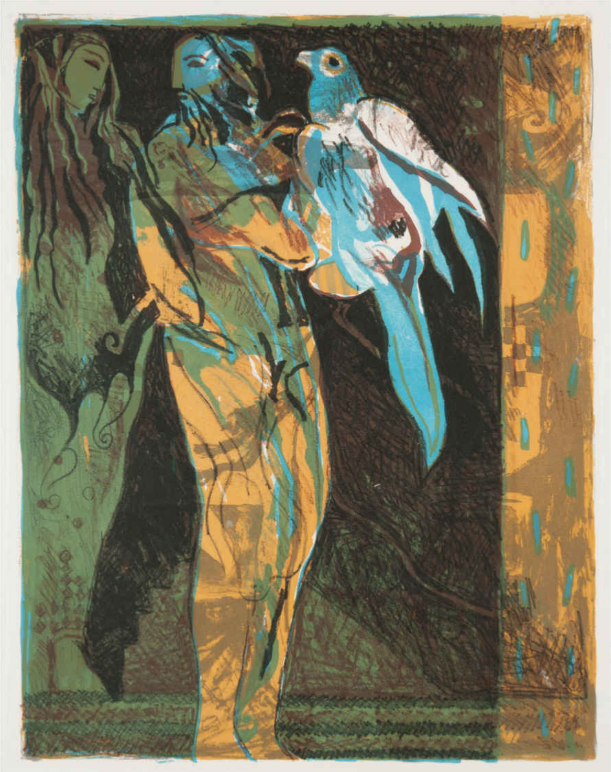
The king said, “Who is it you accuse? Whom do you mean? Where do you point your finger?”

“If you were asleep,” said the vizier, “wake up. I point the finger at the wise Duban, come from Byzantium.”

“Is he my enemy? He is the truest man, the dearest, and the finest in my eye, because he cured me with a thing I only had to hold, and he relieved me of the sickness that defied the doctors. There is no one like him in the world, east or west, near or far, and you say this about him? From today, I will give him every month a thousand dinars, as well as salary and benefits. If I were to share with him my kingdom and my wealth, it would be far less than he deserves. Envy for the wise Duban has entered you, vizier, and you want me to kill him and I will regret it, just as King Sindbad regretted killing his falcon.”[22]

The vizier said, “What is his story?”

And the king told it to him …



"The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot," in which a parrot reports on the infidelity of a merchant's wife while he is away on business, is sometimes added into the story cycle known as "The Craft and Malice of Women," which features a storytelling debate between the king's viziers and the king's concubine about whether women can be trusted. Print by Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.

* * *

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"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF KING SINDBAD AND THE FALCON[23]

THE STORY GOES that there was a king among the kings of Persia who lived for pleasure and loved to hunt above all. He had reared a falcon who never left him but passed the nights perched on his fist, and he had made for her a golden cup that dangled from her neck, and he let her drink from it after the chase.

One day as he sat in his palace, his chief falconer came in and said, “This is a fine day for hunting.”

The king gave the orders[24] and set out with his men, the bird on his wrist. They came to a valley and had just laid a circle of traps when a gazelle appeared in their midst.

“Whoever lets her escape,” said the king, “will lose his head.”

So the men drew their ring close around their prey, who turned to face the king, raised herself high, and crossed her foreleg over her breast as though to kiss the earth. The king bowed to the beast, who leapt over his head and off into the wild.

The king turned to his men and found them winking at each other, and he asked his vizier what they were saying. The vizier said, “They are recalling your words, that whoever lets the gazelle escape will lose his head.”

“On my life,” said the king, “I will catch her.”

He rode off on her trail and kept up his pursuit until he reached her lair, and then he set the falcon on her. The bird clawed at the creature’s eyes[25] and left her dazed and blind, and the king drew his mace and finished her. Then he dismounted, slit her throat and skinned her, and hung the pelt from his saddle.

It was the hour of greatest heat in the dry valley, and the king and his horse were parched, so the king went searching and came upon a tree dripping water from its boughs like butter.[26] His hands being gloved with leather, he took the cup from the falcon’s neck and filled it with this water, but as he bent to drink, the bird struck the cup and tipped it over. So the king filled it a second time and set it before the bird, thinking it was thirsty, but again it overturned the cup, and the king, angry now, took the cup a third time and set it before his horse, but the falcon knocked it over with a sweep of wings.[27]

“God damn you, bird from hell,” said the king. “You will not let me drink, nor let the horse, nor drink yourself.”

And he brought down his sword and cut off her wings, but the falcon raised her head and motioned to the treetop as if to say, “Look up!”

The king looked, and on the highest branch he saw a snake, whose venom he had taken to be water. He regretted what he had done, and, mounting his horse, he rode back with the dead gazelle until he reached his throne. Then the bird, who had not left his wrist, gave a gasp and died, and the king cried out in grief at having killed the creature that had saved his life. That is the story of King Sindbad.[28]

* * *

“MAJESTY,” said the vizier, “what has the wise man done to me? He has caused me no harm. I speak only out of love and fear for you, and if you find that I have lied, let me die like the vizier who tricked the king’s son.”

“What is his story?” asked the king.

And the vizier said …[29]

THE TALE OF THE KING’S SON AND THE GHOUL

THEY SAY there was a king who had a son much given to hunting and trapping, and whose father had charged a vizier to follow him wherever he went. One day the prince set out for the chase with his men, and in the wilderness they saw a beast. The vizier said, “Follow it!” and the prince pursued the creature until he lost his way and found himself alone, not knowing where to turn, when a woman appeared ahead, weeping. The boy said, “Where are you from?”

“I am the daughter,” said the woman, “of one of the kings of India, and I was riding in the wilderness when sleep came over me and threw me from my horse. Now here I am alone and lost.”

The prince took pity on her and let her ride behind him on his horse. As they passed a ruin, she said, “Nature calls.” He let her down into the ruin, and soon he went in after her, not knowing what she was, and found she was a ghoul,[30] and she was saying to her children, “I have brought you a nice fat boy.”

“Mother,” they were saying, “bring him to us. Let us eat his belly.”

At these words, the prince turned back, fearing for his life, but the ghoul followed him out and said, “What do you fear?”

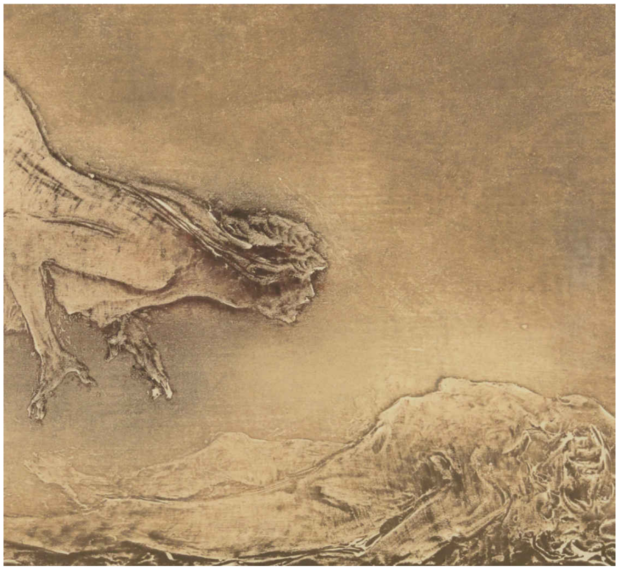
“I am a persecuted man.”

“If you are persecuted,” she said, “God will free you.”

The king’s son raised his eyes to heaven and said, “Lord, protect me from my enemy, for everything is in your power.”

When the ghoul heard his prayer, she let him go,[31] and he went back to his father and told him how the vizier had sent him on the trail of that wild beast and into the ghoul’s arms. And the king called the vizier and had him killed.

* * *



Detail from La goule *by Pierre Roche (1912). The French sculptor and decorative artist Roche used an innovative technique of printmaking on plaster to enhance the sinister qualities possessed by the figure of the ghoul in the European imagination.*

“AND YOU, Majesty,” said the envious vizier, “if you put your trust in this wise man, he will destroy you: He is a foreign agent come to bring you down. Do you not see that he cured you from a distance simply by giving you something to hold?"

"You are right," said the king. "It must be as you say: He has come to destroy me. If he has cured me with something to hold,[32] he may well kill me with something to smell. What should I do with him?"

"Send for him now," said the vizier, "and when he comes, strike off his head, and you shall have your safety."

The king said, "This is good advice."

He sent for Duban, who arrived still full of joy at all the honor, gifts, and favors that were his. He motioned to the king and said these lines:

If I have failed to give the thanks I owe
For whom then do I make my verse and prose?
There fell into my lap—before I knew
To ask!—an avalanche of gifts from you
How could I not commend you to the crowd
And sing my private awe for you out loud
In thanks for all the gifts that bend my shoulder
Even as they turn my care to feathers?

The king said, "Do you know why I have brought you here?"

The wise Duban said, "No."

"I have brought you here to take away your life."[33]

Duban was astonished and said, "Kill me, Majesty? And for what crime?"

"I have been told," said the king, "you are a spy come to kill me, but I will kill you first. You want me for your dinner, but I'll have you for lunch."

He called the executioner and said, "Strike off this wise man's head and rid me of his harm. Strike!"

At these words, the wise man understood he had been envied for his favor with the king, and that somebody had lied to have him killed. He knew the king had little sense or wisdom, and he regretted what was too late to regret. "There is no power and no strength except in God," he said. "I did a good thing and was paid with spite."

And the king was shouting, “Strike!”

“Spare me,” the wise man said, “and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed.”[34]

He said it again just as I did to you, jinni, but you would not turn your mind from murder.

Then King Yunan said to the wise Duban, “I have to kill you, for you cured me with a thing I only had to hold, and I fear you could kill me with anything.”

“Is this my reward?” the wise man said. “Cruelty for care?”

And the king said, “You must die today.”

When the wise man knew his death was near, he wept and blamed himself for doing good to people who were not, and for sowing seeds in barren soil. He said these lines:

Maimuna has an empty head
Though born to a wise father—
And if they call you brother
Keep your wits, and if you walk
The earth, prepare to slip

Then the executioner came near, and bound the wise man’s weeping eyes, and drew his sword. But the wise man said again, “Spare me and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed,” and he recited:

Decent, I
Did not thrive
They, deceitful, did
Sincerity has led me
To a house of sin
If I live, never more
Will I speak my mind
If I die, damn them all
Those who give advice

The wise man added, “Is this my reward? It is like the reward of the crocodile.”[35]

“What,” said the king, “is the story of the crocodile?”

“I am in no condition to tell you a story,” said the wise man, “but I beg you: Spare me and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed.”

And he wept heavy tears.

Then a few of the king’s noblemen stood up and said, “Majesty, spare him for our sake. He has done nothing wrong.”

“You do not know,” said the king, “why I must kill him. If I were to spare him, I would die myself, for he has cured me from a distance of an illness that defied the doctors, and he did so with a thing I only had to hold. I cannot be sure he will not kill me with the same device. I must kill him to be safe.”

Again the wise man said, “Spare me and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed.”

“I have to kill you,” said the king.

And, jinni, when the wise Duban was sure his end had come, he said, “Majesty, delay my death a little. Allow me time to return home,[36] leave instructions for my burial, fulfill my obligations and give alms, and donate my books on medicine and science to a deserving home. In particular, I have a book, rarest of the rare, I want to give to you to keep among your treasures.”

“What makes the book so rare?” asked the king.

“Its wonders are not to be counted,” said Duban, “but the first of its secrets is this: If you, Majesty, cut off my head and open the book at the sixth page, and read three lines from the left page, and speak to me, my head will speak to you and answer what you ask.”

The king was amazed.

“Do you mean,” he said, “that if I cut your head off, open the book and read the lines you say, and speak to your head, it will speak to me? Nothing could be stranger.”

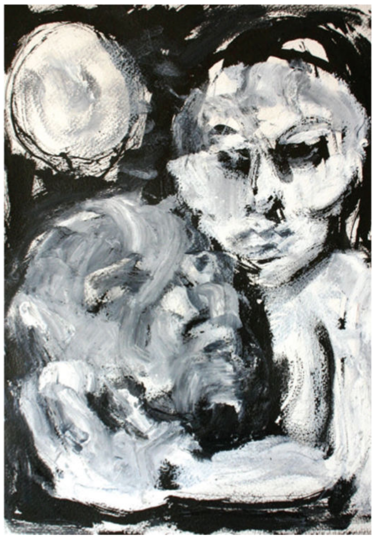
He sent the wise man home with guards to settle his affairs, and on the following day he went back to the court, and so too did the princes and viziers, officers and nobles. Then the wise Duban arrived, and in his hands were an old book and a kohl jar containing powder.

He sat down, sent for a tray, poured out the powder, spread it, and said to the king, “Take this book, Majesty, and do not open it until I die, then have my head placed on the tray and pressed into the powder: This will stanch the blood. Open the book, address your questions to my head, and it will answer back. There is no power and no strength except in God,[37] and remember: spare me and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed.”

“I have to kill you,” said the king, “if only to see your head speak.”

He took the book and told the executioner to cut off the wise man’s head. He drew the sword and, with a single stroke, dropped the head into the tray and pressed it in the powder and the bleeding stopped. Then the wise Duban opened his eyes and said, “Now, Majesty, open the book.”[38]

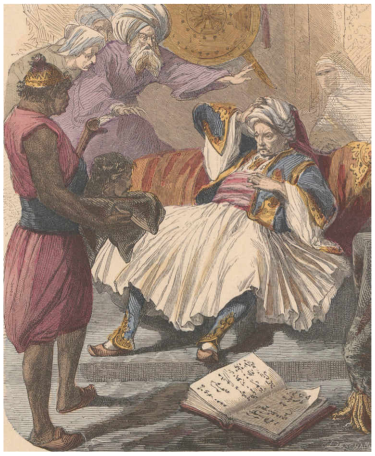
When the king opened the book, he found the pages stuck. He put his finger to his mouth and wet it with saliva and turned to the first page. In the same effortful way, he turned page after page, and when he had turned seven and found nothing written, he said, “Duban, I cannot see a written word inside this book.”[39]



King Yunan demands the head of the wise Duban. Painting by Brazilian artist Antonio Hélio Cabral, intended for the Portuguese translation by Mamede Jarouche in 2006, but never published. Printed with the permission of the artist.

“Keep turning,” said Duban.

The king turned more pages and found nothing, but as he licked and turned, the drug entered his body (the book was laced with poison) and he began to sway and heave and shake …



The wise Duban gets his revenge. Illustration from Les mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

When the wise Duban saw that the king began to sway and shake, he said these lines:

Their reign was long and cruel
And in a moment gone
Had justice been their rule[40]
Justice would be done
But they, brutal in power
Have met a brutal end
And wake to hear the hour
Crowing its revenge

As the wise man’s head finished these lines, the king fell dead. Then the head died, too.

* * *

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The fisherman said to the jinni, “Consider this story. Had the king spared the wise man, God would have spared him, but the king refused and killed him, and God killed him in turn. Had you, jinni, agreed to spare me, I would have spared you, but you desired my death and I shall quicken yours by sending you inside this bottle to the bottom of the sea.”

But the jinni cried, “Fisherman, don’t do it! Spare me and forgive me what I did. If I was bad, you should be better. Do not do what Imama did to Atika.”[41]

“What did Imama do to Atika?”

“This is no time for stories: I am in a cage. But if you set me free, I will relate it.”

“Into the sea you must go,” said the fisherman. “There is no escape for you, for my imploring did not move you, though I have never wronged you but only set you free. When you treated me this way, I knew that you were wicked to the bone, malicious, and that you repay good with harm. When I throw you to the waves, I will build a hut here, and live there just for you, to warn all those who fish you out against you, and tell them what you did and have them cast you back into the sea and let you languish there until the end of time.”

“Set me free this time,” said the jinni, “and I pledge that I will never trouble you or do you harm, but I will make you rich.”

The fisherman agreed, secured the pledge with oaths and vows, and made the jinni swear on the name of the Almighty he would only do him good. Then he opened the jar. The smoke seeped out, rose clear of the mouth, and resolved into a jinni who kicked the jar away into the sea.

At this sight, the fisherman was terrified and wet himself and said, “No good can come of this,” and he was sure of death. Then he fortified his heart and said, “You promised, jinni, and pledged that you would not betray me. Come, or God will punish you in turn, and remember what Duban said to the king: ‘Spare me and God will spare you,[42] but kill me and be killed.’”

But the jinni laughed at his words.

The fisherman said, “Spare me.”

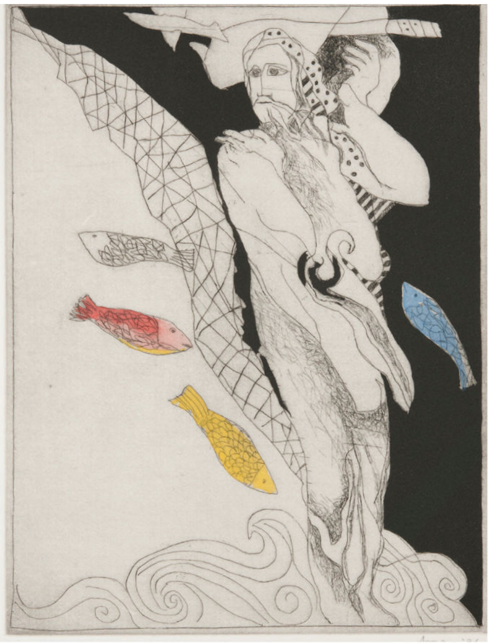
“Follow me,” the jinni replied.[43]

The fisherman, hardly believing his escape, followed him out of the city, reached a mountain, climbed it to the other side, and came to a vast plain. In its center was a lake surrounded by four hills.

Here the jinni stopped and told the fisherman to cast his net and fish. In the water were fish of many colors, white and red and blue and yellow. He cast his net and drew it in, and found four fish inside, blue and yellow, red and white. He marveled and was glad.

“Take them to the sultan of your city,” said the jinni. “He will give you enough to make you rich (forgive me: I know no other way to make you rich), but do not fish here more than once a day.”

“I will miss you,” said the jinni at last, and kicked the earth, which opened to admit him, while the fisherman went to the city, full of wonder at the jinni and at the fish of many colors. When he entered the king’s palace, he presented the fish to him….



“In the water were fish of many colors.” Print by Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.

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The king looked at the fish of many colors, took one in his hands, and was amazed. He told his vizier to take them to the cook he had been given by the emperor of Byzantium. The vizier went to the cook and said, “Tears are for crying, as they say. The king was given these four fish and he wants you to fry them.”

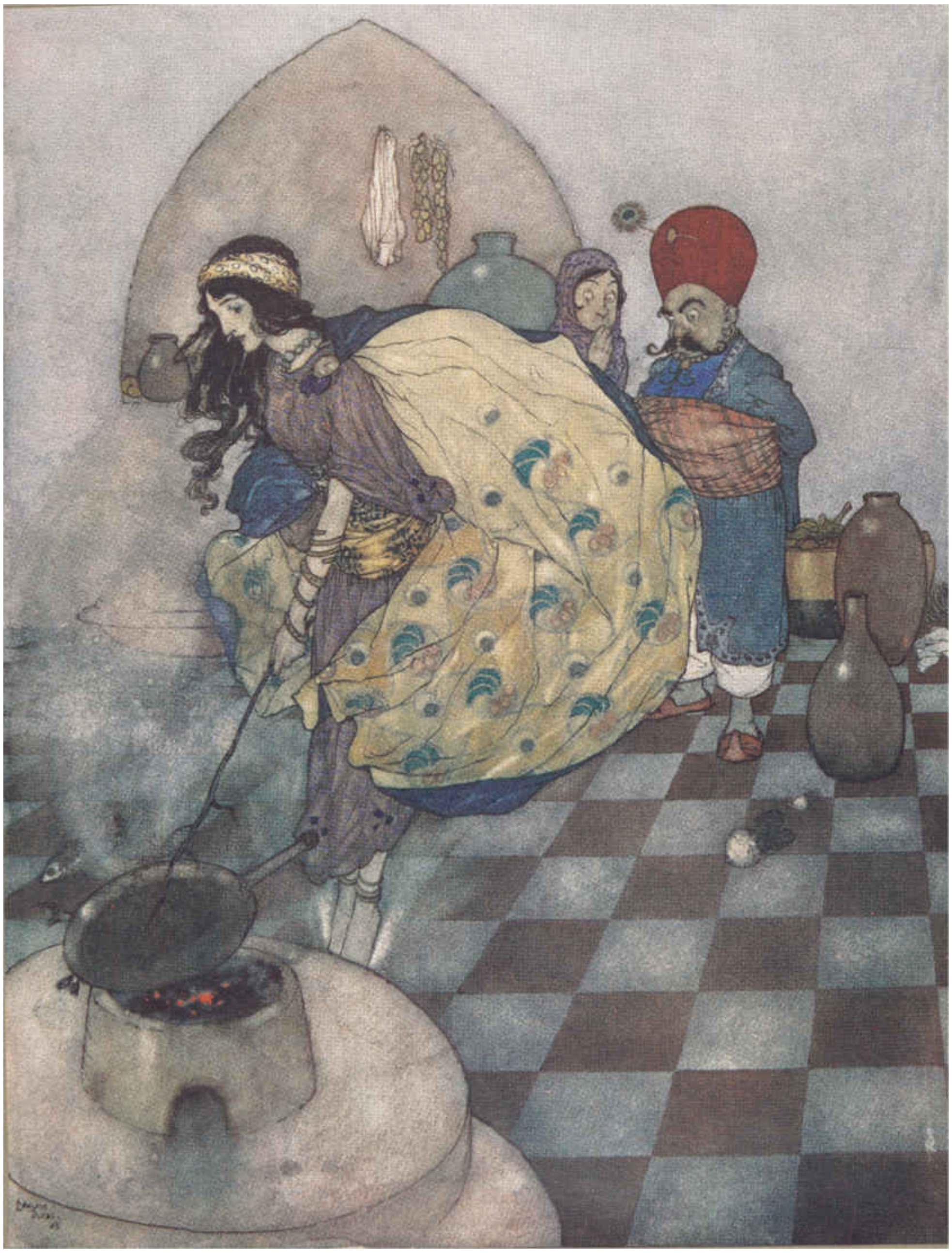
Then he went back to the king, who told the vizier to give the fisherman four hundred dirhams, and the fisherman received the coins and held them in his clothes and off he ran. As he ran, he stumbled, fell, and stood again, thinking he was in a dream, and for his family he bought all they would need.[44]

As for the cook, she scaled and cleaned the fish and cut them up, set a frying pan over the fire, poured in sesame oil, and waited till it hissed. Then she threw in the fish, and when one side was done, she turned them over. No sooner had she flipped them when the kitchen wall split open and a girl came out, a lovely shape and velvet cheeks, eyes darkened with kohl, a perfect face, and she wore a sleeveless dress of satin, fringed with flowers in the Egyptian style, medallion earrings in her ears and bracelets on her arms. In her hand she held a supple cane, and she poked the cane into the pan and in good Arabic said, “Fishes! Will you keep your promises?”

At this sight, the cook went faint. When the girl repeated what she said, the fish lifted their heads out of the pan and in good Arabic said, “Yes! If you come back, we will too! Keep your word and we’ll be true![45] If you don’t, then that makes two!”

Then the girl overturned the frying pan and disappeared the way she came, and the wall was sealed behind her. When the cook came to, she found the four fish charred to cinders and was sorry. Fearing what the king would do, she said, “He broke his spear on the first raid!” As she blamed herself, the vizier appeared and said, “Where is the fish? We laid the table for the king and he is waiting.”

In tears, the cook recounted what had happened with the fish and what she saw. The vizier, astonished, said, “How strange,” and sent a messenger after the fisherman, who came back before long. The vizier screamed in his face and threatened him and said, “Bring us at once four fish like those you brought before.”



“The kitchen wall split open and a girl came out.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

The fisherman went home and fetched his fishing gear and left the city, climbed the mountain, reached the plain on the far side, and found the lake. Then he cast his net. When he pulled it up, he found inside four fish as he had done before, and carried them to the vizier, who took them to the cook and said, “Fry them in front of me.”

The kitchen girl prepared the fish, placed the frying pan over the fire, and threw them in. When both sides were done, the wall split open and the girl appeared in gorgeous clothes and necklaces and jewels, the cane in her hand. She poked it in the pan and in good Arabic said, “Fishes! Will you keep your promises?”

The fish lifted their heads and said, “Yes, yes! If you come back, we will too! Keep your word and we’ll be true! If you don’t, then that makes two!”

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And Shahrazad agreed.

When the fish had spoken, the girl overturned the frying pan and disappeared into the wall, which closed behind her. The vizier said, “I can no longer hide this from the king.” He went to see the king and told him what had happened with the fish before his eyes. The king, amazed, said, “I would like to see it.”

He sent for the fisherman, who came back before long. The king said, “Bring me four more fish at once, and quick!”

Three officers escorted him, and the fisherman returned after a while with four fish, red and white and blue and yellow. The king gave him four hundred dirhams, which he gathered in his clothes and left. And the king said to the vizier, “Fry them here before me.”

“I hear and obey,” said the vizier.

He called for a pan and stove and sat to clean the fish, poured in the oil and lit the fire, and placed the fish inside. When both sides were nearly done, the palace wall split open, frightening the king and his vizier, and there appeared a slave who was like a mountain or a remnant of the tribe of Ad,[46] tall as a reed and wide as a bench. In his hand was a green branch, and he said, “Fishes! Will you keep your promises?”

The fish lifted their heads and said, “Yes, yes! If you come back, we will too! Keep your word and we’ll be true! If you don’t, then that makes two!”

Then the slave overturned the pan in the palace (the fish had turned to ashes) and disappeared into the wall, which closed behind him.

“I cannot let this rest,” said the king. “There must be some secret story to these fish.”

He summoned the fisherman and said to him, “Where do you catch these fish?”

“My lord,” he said, “I catch them in a lake between four hills, behind the mountain.”

The king asked his vizier, “Do you know this lake?”

“No,” said the vizier. “For sixty years I have traveled, roamed, and hunted here, sometimes for a day or two, sometimes for a month or two, but never have I known there was a lake behind the mountain.”

Then the king said to the fisherman, “How far is this lake?”

“King of the age,” he said, “it is an hour away.”

The king, amazed, gave the order to the soldiers and rode out with his troops behind the fisherman, who muttered curses at the jinni.

They left the city, met the mountain, rode over it, and came to a vast plain that they had never seen before in all their lives. There was a lake between four hills, in whose clear water they saw fish in all their colors, red and white and blue and yellow.

The king stood there agape. He turned to his vizier and princes, lords and nobles, and said, “Have you ever seen this lake?”

“Never,” they said.

“And none of you knew it was here?”

They kissed the earth and swore.

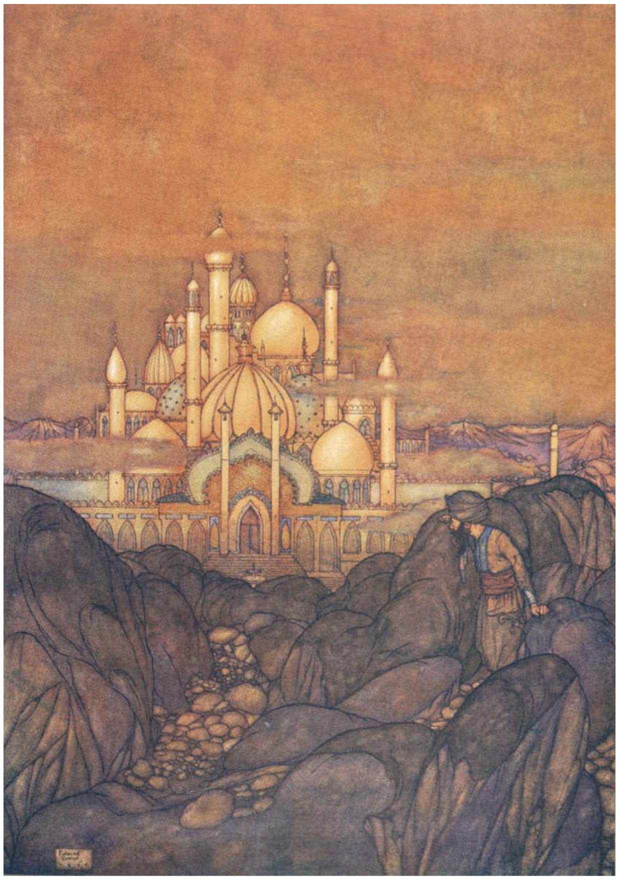
“This is a mystery,”[47] said the king, “and I will not return before I learn what lies behind this lake, its fish, and their four colors.”

He told his men to stop and pitch the tents, and they waited until night. Then he summoned the vizier, who was wise and practiced in the trials of life, and they spoke out of sight of the troops.

The king said, “Let me tell you what I plan to do. I will go myself to find the secret of the lake and fish, and tomorrow you shall sit outside my tent and tell the princes that the king is indisposed and has ordered you not to let anyone into his presence. You must tell no one of my plan or where I am, and you must wait three days.”

The vizier, unable to refuse, agreed. Then the king tightened his belt and slipped the royal sword inside and climbed one of the hills and walked all night. When dawn had broken and the sun had risen and the day begun, he saw a dark shape in the distance and moved toward it, happy, thinking, “Maybe someone there will tell me more.”

The king walked on until the shape became a palace[48] of black stone plated with iron, built under a lucky star. Finding one door closed, one open, he was glad and gave a gentle knock, and waited and heard nothing, so he knocked again, more strongly than before. But he could not hear or see a thing. He knocked a third time and kept knocking but heard nothing, and he thought, “It must be empty.”



“The shape became a palace.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

Mustering his courage, he went in, and in the hallway shouted, “People of the palace! I am a stranger[49] and a hungry traveler: Do you have food to spare? God will reward you!”

He repeated this a second and a third time and heard nothing. Then (his heart was bolder now) he moved on from the hallway to the center of the palace, looked around, but could not see a soul….

* * *

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The palace was embellished[50] with silk carpets, leather mats, and hanging drapes, and there were seats and cushions, and a courtyard bordered by four arches, through which were sunken rooms that faced each other two by two. In the center was a fountain, where four lions of red gold spouted water from their mouths like gems and pearls, and all around were birds, singing as they crossed the palace under a high net to keep them from flying off. The king wondered, sad that there was no one there to tell him more. He sat in thought beside an alcove when he heard a plaintive voice, and moans, and these sad lines:

You never spare me, time, or stop.
Pain here and danger there, and here
Between them is my heart.
No mercy for a lover brought
Low by love’s court, nor
For the rich turned poor.
I used to burn to be

The breeze about you, but
Since judgment fell
No sight is left in me.
What can the bowman
Taking aim do when
The bowstring breaks?
When cares descend
In droves on a young heart
Where can he go?
Where can he go?

At these wept lines, the king rose and followed the voice to a curtain over a door, and lifted it to find a hall. At the far end was a boy[51] who sat a forearm's length above the floor, finely made and young, moon face and silver tongue, dewy brow and downy jaw, rosy cheek spiked with a freckle like a speck of amber, as the poet had it:

Slip of a thing
Whose hair and blaze
Are to the world
Brightness and shade.
No flaw his cheek's
Round mark—
Anemone's
Black heart.

The king, happy to see him, greeted the boy, who wore a silken tunic fringed with gold in the Egyptian style, on his head a round Egyptian hat, and on his face the signs of grief and sorrow. He greeted the king with care and said, "My lord, dearer than anyone I ever rose to greet,[52] forgive me for not rising."

"You are forgiven," said the king. "I am your guest, come with a serious matter: I want to know the reason for this lake, these fish of different colors, this palace where you sit alone, and for your tears."

At these words, the boy’s eyes streamed with tears down to his chest, and he recited:

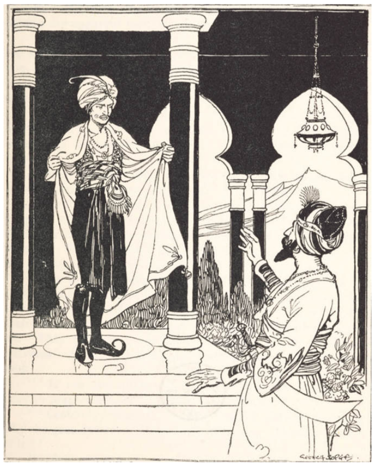
Say to the one the days have shot with arrows
How many has life felled, how many raised?
If you were sleeping, God’s eye never shuts.
For whom has time been fair?
For whom the world unchanged?

He wept heavy tears, and the king, astonished, said, “Why do you cry?”

“How could I not,” he said, “this being my condition?”

He lifted his hem, and the king saw that half of him (from head to waist) was made of human flesh, the other half (from waist to toe) was all black stone …

The king was full of grief and sadness for the boy, and said, “You have increased my cares by one: I sought an answer to the secret of the fish, now I must ask about their case and yours. Hurry, my boy, and tell me your story.”



“The other half (from waist to toe) was all black stone.” Illustration by George Soper (1913).

“Lend me your ears,” said the boy, “your eyes and mind.”

“My ears and eyes and mind are ready,” said the king.

And the boy spoke….

* * *

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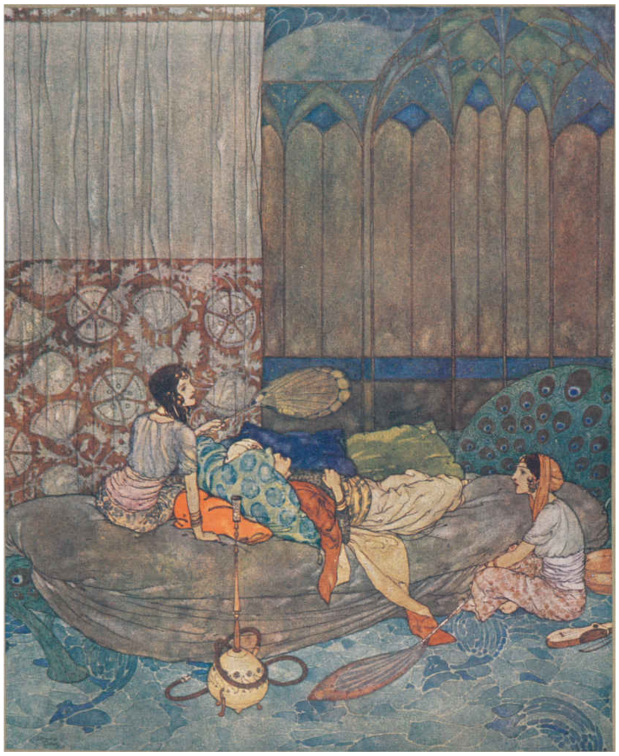


The young king seeks rest. Illustration by Edmund Dulac, from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907). Dulac’s influential visions of the* Nights *were shaped by his study of Islamic book illustrations.*

THE TALE OF THE ENCHANTED PRINCE

MY STORY with these fish is wonderful. It is so strange that if you were to carve it with a needle in the corner of the eye,[53] it would be a warning to the wise.

You see, my lord, my father was the king of this city. His name was King Mahmud of the Black Isles (these four hills were islands), and he ruled for seventy years. When he died, I took the throne and married my uncle's daughter,[54] who adored me to the point that if I left her for a single day, she would not eat or drink till I returned.

We lived together for five years until one day, when she was at the baths, I asked the cook to grill some meat and to prepare a feast. Then I came to this palace, lay down where you are sitting now, and asked two servant girls to fan me—one at my head, one at my feet. But I was anxious and could not find sleep.

As I lay there, eyes shut, breathing deeply, I heard the girl who fanned my head say to the one who fanned my feet, "Masuda, I feel sorry for our master—still so young! What a shame about that wife of his."

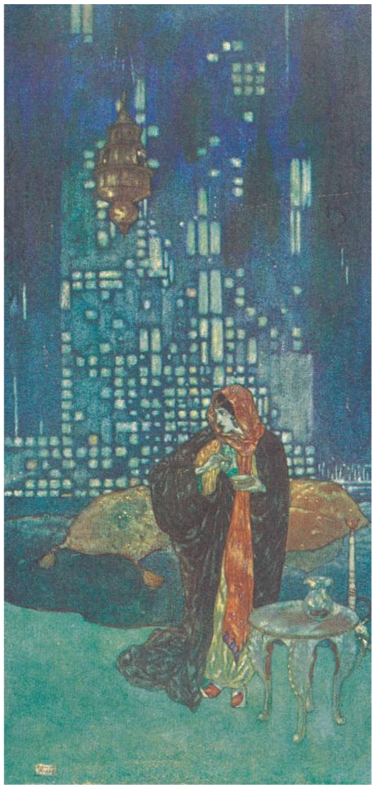
"Don't," said the other. "There is a place in hell for girls who lie and cheat. Poor man, so young, and married to that whore who sleeps out every night."

"Is he stupid?" said the first. "When he wakes up at night, does he not see she's gone?"

"God curse our lady whore,"[55] the other said. "Do you suppose she gives him time to think? She tips a sleeping potion in his drink, gives him the cup that knocks him out, then she slips away and stays out until dawn. When she returns, she lights some incense, holds it to his nose, and he wakes up. An awful shame!"

When I heard these words, my lord, I went into a rage and could not wait for night to fall. When my wife returned, the feast was served, we had a bite and went to bed. I only pretended to drink from the cup, then spit it out and made a show of sleep.[56]

Just as I lay down, I heard her say, "Sleep, and may you never rise again. I hate the sight of you."



The queen puts a sleeping potion in his drink. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

She rose and dressed, perfumed herself, took my sword and left. Then, my lord, I got up….

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

I followed my wife out of the palace and across the city to the gate, and there she spoke some words I could not understand.[57] At once the locks fell off, the gate stood wide, and she walked out.

I followed her through heaps of trash until she reached a hut with a brick dome and slipped inside. I climbed to the roof, and when I looked down, I saw my wife standing before a man, rough-looking, sitting on a reed mat, dressed in rags. I saw her kiss the ground before him.

He raised his head and said, “Why are you late? My cousins were here drinking, playing, singing, having fun, each with a girl, except for me: I did not want to drink until you came.”

“Love of my heart,” my wife replied, “do you not know that I am married to my cousin? Just the sight of him fills me with horror for my fellow creatures, and talking to him makes me hate all human-kind! If it were not for you, I would not wait till morning to reduce his city to a pile of rubble, a ruin for the owls and crows to haunt, a playground for the foxes and the wolves, and hurl every last stone beyond Mount Qaf.”[58]

“You are lying,” he said. “I swear that from tonight, if my cousins come and you do not, I will not see you, sleep with you, or let my skin touch yours. You play with us like toys. We are no more than whims to you, so go to hell.”

When I heard this, lord, the world went dark before me and I forgot where I was. My wife was crying, saying to him, “Darling, love of mine, if you are angry with me, who else do I have? If you turn me out, who will take me in? Oh my love, light of my eyes, my life….”

And she wept at his feet[59] until he was appeased. Then she was happier, shed her clothes, and said, “Don’t you have something for your little girl to eat?”

“Look in the pan,” he said.

Lifting the lid, she found some fried rat bones and ate them.

“And in that jug,” he said, “there is some beer.”

She drank it, washed her hands, and, naked now, lay beside the man on the reed mat. I climbed down from the dome and came in through the door, took the sword my wife had brought with her and drew it, set to kill them both. I struck him first across the neck and thought that I had killed him….

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And Shahrazad agreed.

I failed to cut the veins[60] but sliced the skin and flesh around his throat and thought that I had killed him as he gasped for air. In the darkness, my wife pulled away, and, unnoticed, I retreated, left the sword where I had found it, went back to the city, and returned to bed in the palace.

In the morning when my wife appeared, I saw that she had cut her hair and was in mourning dress.

“Cousin,” she said, “do not be hard on me. The news has reached me that my mother died, my father has been killed in war, and both my brothers lost their lives—one from a bite, the other from a fall. I have the right to weep and mourn.”

“Do as you please,” was all I said.

For a year she mourned and wept, then she said, “I want to build a mausoleum in the palace, a place of mourning I will call the House of Grief.”

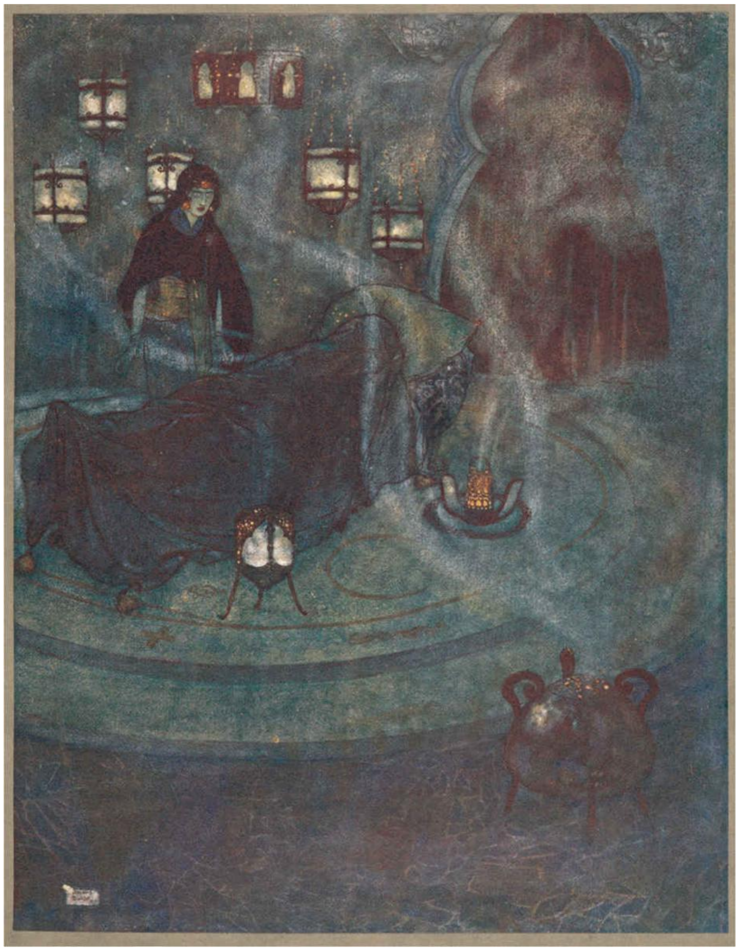
And I said, “As you please.”

She gave the order and the House of Grief was built[61] with a domed roof that held a tomb. Then, my lord, she moved her wounded lover to the tomb. He was alive but could no longer do her any good, could not eat or speak since I had cut his throat. Every day she went to him with drinks and broth, morning and night, and she did this for a year as I, nursing my patience, said nothing.

One day I walked in on her while she was unaware and found her weeping, singing:

I look at you:
Your pain is mine
And sharp.
I lose you from
My sight and still

It smarts.
Oh talk to me
My love, my only
Heart.



The queen visits her wounded lover in the House of Grief. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

"Cousin," I said, "enough. Your tears are of no use."

"Do not try and stop my grief or I will kill myself," she said.

I left her alone to mourn and weep another year, until one day I came in angry, exercised by something, and it seemed to me that my wife's grief had gone too far. I found her in the mausoleum by the tomb, saying, "My lord, I have heard nothing from you. For three years now I have been waiting for a word."

Then she said these lines:

O tomb, O tomb,[62] *where is his beauty now?*
Are you the thief who stole that lovely brow?
Neither a garden nor a sky, O tomb
How then can you contain both sun and moon?

Her verses fed my anger and I said, “How much longer!” and these lines:

O tomb, O tomb, where is his blackness now?
Are you the thief who stole that dirty brow?
O tomb, neither a toilet nor a mine
How then can you contain both coal and grime?

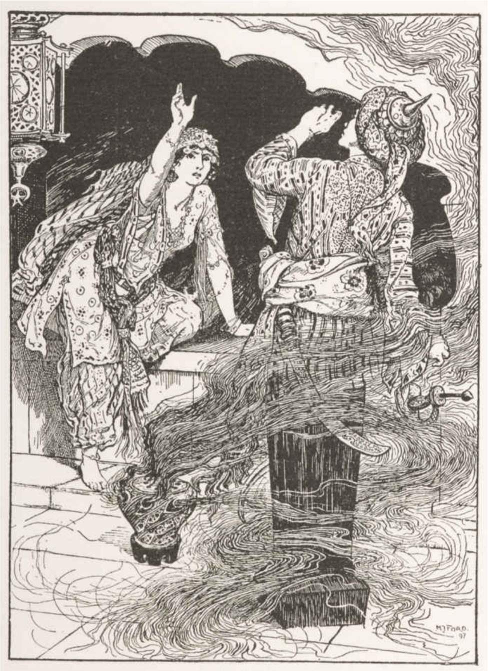
My wife leapt up and said, “You dog, you did this to me, wounded my beloved and deprived me of his youth! For three years he has lain here between life and death.”

“Filthiest of whores who sleep with slaves,” I said. “Yes, it was me. I did it.”

Then I drew my sword to strike her, but when she saw that I wanted to kill her, she laughed and said, “Forget it, dog. The past is gone, the dead not coming back, but God gave me the power to get even with the one who did this to me, the man who lit this fire inside my heart.”

She rose and said some words I could not understand, and said, “By magic and by craft,[63] become half man, half stone.”

And from that moment, lord, I have lived as you see me now, sad and helpless, unable to sleep or stand, neither among the living nor the dead….



“Become half man, half stone.” Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

* * *

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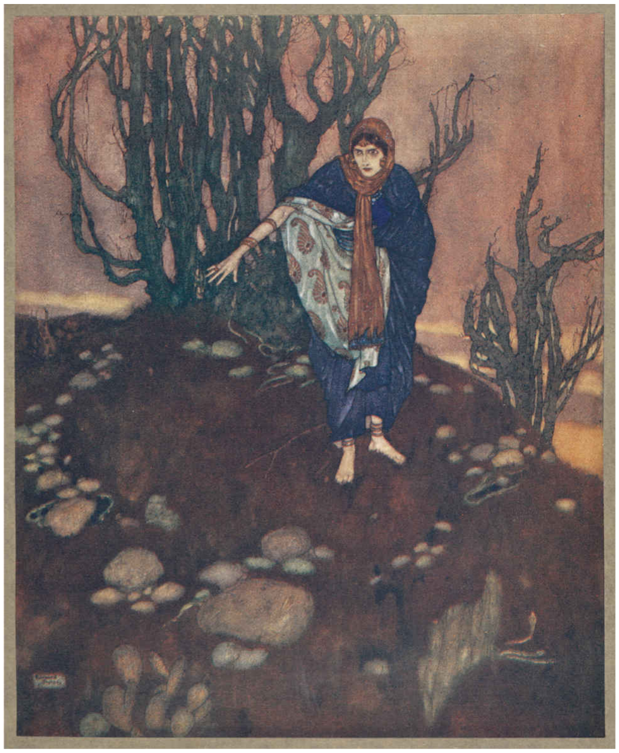
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

When my wife did this to me, she cast a spell on the whole city (gardens, markets, fields, the places where your troops are camping now) and changed their residents who were of four persuasions (Muslims, Magians, Christians, Jews)[64] to fish: the Muslims white, the Magians red, the Christians blue, and the Jews yellow. And she changed the islands into hills around the lake.



“She cast a spell on the whole city.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

If this were not enough, she strips me every day and with a whip gives me a hundred lashes until my back is cut to ribbons and my shoulders bleed. Under my fine clothes, she makes me wear a hair shirt of coarse wool.

★ ★ ★

AND he began to weep.

“Young man,” the king said, “you have replaced one question with another: Where is your wife, and where is the mausoleum with the wounded man?”

“The man,” he said, “is lying in the tomb next door. Every day at sunrise, my wife comes, strips and whips me while I cry and scream, helpless to move since I am half flesh and blood, half stone. Then she goes to her lover and gives him broth to drink. Tomorrow she will come as usual.”

"Young man," the king said, "I will do something for you that history will remember, and it will make my name."

Then they sat together talking until night came and they slept.

At daybreak, the king rose, undressed and drew his sword, entered the mausoleum, found it lit with lamps and sweet with incense, saffron, balm. He went straight to the lover of the prince's wife, killed him, pulled him out, and threw him down a well.[65] Then he put on the lover's clothes and took his place inside the tomb, his sword concealed under the folds of cloth.

When, after a while, the witch appeared, she stripped her husband, took the whip and brought it down on him as he cried, "Cousin! Mercy, mercy!"

"You should have had mercy on me," she said, "and spared my lover…."

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

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And Shahrazad agreed.

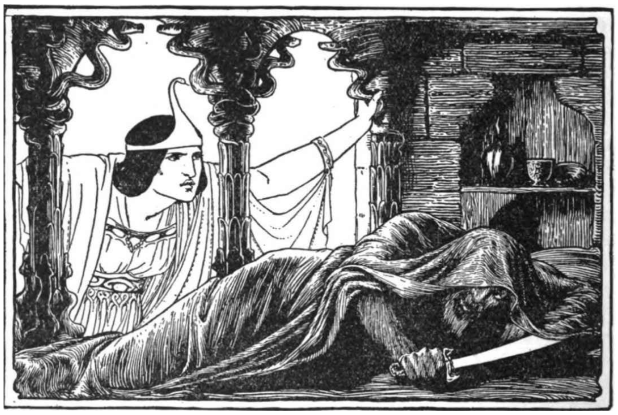
After she had whipped her husband[66] to her liking, she dressed him in the hair shirt and covered it with clothes. Then she went to her lover in the tomb with broth, as was her custom, entered the mausoleum and began to weep and moan, repeating:

Love, it is not like you to deny me.
Our parting is my enemies' delight.
Come to me: my life is in your sight.
Love, it is not like you to hold back.

Then she sang:

For how long must I face your scorn?
Have I not paid enough in tears?
Beloved, talk to me.[67]
Beloved, speak to me.
Beloved, answer me.

The king, still in disguise, lowered his voice and said, “Ah! Ah! There is no power and no strength except in God!”



The disguised king speaks to the sorceress. Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1915).*

When she heard these words, she gave a cry of joy and fainted. And when she revived, she said, “Did you really speak to me?”

“Do you deserve that I should speak to you?”

“Why not?” she asked.

“All day,” he said, “you punish your husband. From dinner until dawn, he cries and screams, curses you and me, and his shrieks keep me from sleep. If it were not for this, I would have been cured long ago. That is why I have said nothing until now.”

“My lord,” she said, “with your permission I will set him free.”

“Deliver him,” he said, “and free us of his noise.”

She left the mausoleum, filled a bowl with water, spoke over it a spell,[68] and the water bubbled as if in a pan over a fire. She sprinkled drops on her husband the prince and said, “If you were made this way or changed by the Creator’s anger, stay as you are, but if you were changed by craft and magic, return to your first form.”

The young man shook and stood, upright and whole and happy, and thanked God.

Then his wife said, “Leave my sight and don’t come back. If I see you again, I will kill you.”

And she roared at him and drove him out. Then she went back to the tomb and said, “My lord, come out and let me see your lovely face.”

In an altered voice, the king said, “You have rid me of the limb but not the body.”

“What is the body?” she said.

“It is the people of this city and its islands. Every night the fish lift their heads out of the lake to beg and curse me, and this is why I cannot heal. Go to them and set them free, then come back to hold my hand and help me out.”

Delighted, she said, “My lord, yes, yes my love.”[69]

Then she rose and went down to the lake….

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

After the wife spoke words over the water, the fish began to dance, the spell that held them there was lifted, and they changed to people who resumed their lives and work. Then she went back to the palace, entered the tomb, and said, “My lord, give me your darling hand.”

In a muffled voice, the king said, “Come a little closer.”

She shifted, and he said, “Come closer still.”

She came so near their bodies touched.

Then he drew his sword[70] and drove it into her, slicing her in two, and she fell in pieces to the ground. He went out and found the young man waiting for him and congratulated him on being free. The young man kissed the king’s hand, covered him in thanks, and blessed him.

“Will you stay here,” the king asked, “or come with me to my city?”

“King of the age,” the young man said, “do you know the distance between your city and mine?”

“Half a day’s journey,” said the king.

“Wake up,” said the young man. “It is a full year’s journey.[71] You made it here in half a day because the city was enchanted.”

“Still,” said the king, “will you stay here or come with me?”

“Majesty,” the young man said, “I will not leave your side, even for a moment.”

The king was glad and said, “Praise be to God for giving you to me. You will be a son to me, my first.”

They embraced and, full of joy, returned together to the palace. The young man told his court that he was going on a journey. He spent ten days preparing, gathering what he would need. Then he left with the king (the king’s heart burned to see the city he had left a year before), and they set out with servants bearing gifts and treasures, fifty mamluks,[72] and many guides. They journeyed day and night for a full year until, with God’s good favor, they arrived.

They had word sent to the vizier, who rode out to greet them with his troops and half the city’s people. Having given up all hope of seeing their king again, they were elated, and to celebrate, they decorated every street with silk.

And the vizier, having dismounted, kissed the ground before the king and thanked God for his safety, then he led them back into the city. The king sat on his throne and told his vizier why he had been absent for a year, told him everything that happened with the young man and his wife, and how he set the city free.

Then the princes, lords, and nobles took their places, and the king honored them with gifts and favors. Then he sent for the fisherman[73] who was the reason for the freeing of the city and their prince, and he gave him robes of honor and said, “Do you have children?”

“A boy and two girls,” said the fisherman.

The king had them brought, too, and he himself married one daughter, and the other one he married to the young man who was cursed. The son he took into his service as the royal mirror-bearer.

To his vizier he gave the kingship of the city with the four islands. He sent him off with food and fodder for the journey, and the fifty mamluks who had come with them, and many others, charged with gifts and treasures for the princes of that kingdom. The vizier took his leave, kissed the king's hand, and left.

The king, the young man, and the fisherman lived happy lives. The fisherman became among the richest of his age, and his daughters were the wives of kings.[74]

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1. *"One casts the line, the other eats the sole":* The appeal of the *One Thousand and One Nights* tales to listeners of modest circumstances is encapsulated in the verses of the fisherman. They also point to the accessibility of these tales to new classes of readers when they were translated into Western languages. The struggles of characters like this one would be answered by the ending added to this tale, but also by other tales that showed the potential for destiny to raise ordinary people from their humble conditions—for example, "The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler." The added stories of Diyab and Galland in the eighteenth century—including "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba"—would add to this strain in the *Nights*.

2. *cast the net a third time:* Bruno Bettelheim emphasizes the repeated struggles of the fisherman as a great strength of this story, which implicitly shows children that failure precedes success and one must not give up (pp. 33–34).

3. *"The shape of your life is not up to you":* These meditations on fate by the fisherman exemplify the way in which poetry is integrated into the *Nights*. Translators such as Henry Torrens, who believed the verse was essential to the stories, took pains to explain the great esteem for poetry in Arab society and the value placed on people being able to express themselves in verse with ease and elegance. He did not find it disconcerting to hear a fisherman extemporizing in verse, for he claimed early education, "even among the lowest classes … puts children in possession of some of the best pieces of their favorite poets, and with strong feeling and a plastic language, there is no reason why this poetic bias, should not in after-life under exciting causes, make the nervous Arab *improvise*" (Introduction, p. iii).

4. *let the sea serve him as it had served Moses:* Muhsin al-Musawi suggests that this reference to Moses (or Musa in the Qur'an) may allude to Moses's struggles as well as his achievements as he led his people to freedom (p. 78).

5. *its mouth stopped with lead bearing a seal ring's mark:* A reader (or listener) with knowledge of the role of Solomon in punishing the rebellious jinn would immediately suspect that this is one of the containers in which the prophet Solomon had imprisoned a jinni. According to Islamic

cosmology, God had granted King Solomon dominion over all living creatures on earth, as well as over the winds and other elements. His seal ring was engraved with the name of God and allowed him to command the jinn. Medieval story collections such as al-Tha'labi's *Tales of the Prophets* explain that Solomon was able to force rebellious jinn to work for him, building palaces and places of prayer. While some jinn accepted the truth of Islam, others revolted against God and swore loyalty to the evil Iblis. Solomon punished them with confinement in containers sealed with his ring that were thrown into the sea. Some repented, but others remained agents of wickedness.

6. *the smoke gathered and swirled and turned into a jinni:* The jinni is a creature of fire and often appears in a cloud of dust or smoke. As a shape-shifter, it can take on any form it desires. Seale's translation enhances the strangeness of this vision. The repetitive rhythm of the early metaphors and similes is broken by the more unconventional images of "trumpet nostrils," "buckler ears," and "a street of a throat." Eschewing cliché, she draws the reader into the strange horror of the moment.

7. *"Solomon, prophet of God," the jinni said, "mercy!":* The jinni has been imprisoned for so long that he does not know that Solomon had died long before. Marina Warner believes that Solomon's distinctive role in Muslim cosmology is crucial to the way in which magic works in the *Nights*. Solomon's extraordinary power over the natural world (which included the ability to speak the languages of beasts and birds and to command the elements) created a space for beneficent magic in the stories of the *Nights* (pp. 41–44). The jinni encountered by the fisherman, however, represents the threatening potential within the supernatural, for, in the absence of the legendary king, there is little to restrain his rage.

8. *"Make a wish":* This story subverts expectations of the jinn established in *Nights* stories like "The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler" or the added tale of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," where these powerful creatures offer help or even obey the human protagonist. In the story of Maʿruf, the cobbler flees his hateful wife, and when he takes refuge in a mosque and prays to God for aid, a jinni appears to grant his wish. He later finds a ring that gives him command over a different jinni. Other variants on the wish-granting spirit can be found in the fairy tales of the brothers Grimm, where a magic flounder fulfills wishes in "The Fisherman and His Wife" and a demon in a bottle fulfills a boy's desire for riches in "The Spirit in the Bottle." In contrast, the jinni that the fisherman meets in this *Nights* story clearly has not repented of his evil ways, despite his many years of punishment, and he is under no obligation to reward his benefactor.

9. *"I am one of the rebellious jinn":* The jinni places himself alongside Sakhr al-Jinni, an evil jinni who famously rebelled against Solomon. According to a commentary on the Qur'an, Sakhr took on the shape of Solomon and stole his seal ring from one of his concubines and was able to rule his kingdom for forty days. When Solomon recovered his throne, he took Sakhr, tied a great stone to his neck, and cast him into Lake Tiberias (Lane, vol. 1, pp. 104–5, n. 9). The image of the rebellious jinni who "vowed to destroy whoever should at last free him" was used by Charles Dickens to warn his audience in Birmingham in 1844 about the danger to society posed by the "Spirit of Ignorance" fostered by a failure to provide for the educational needs of the poor (Slater, p. 142, n. 19).

10. *"So I raged and roared and spat":* Bettelheim's psychological analysis of this story compares the emotional journey of the jinni to that of a young child who feels he has been

“deserted”: “First he thinks to himself how happy he will be when his mother comes back … and how he will reward her. But as time passes, the child becomes angrier and angrier, and he fantasizes the terrible revenge he will take on those who have deprived him” (p. 29). Since a child cannot consciously acknowledge his wish to destroy the family he loves and depends on, “The Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni” offers an opportunity to empathize subconsciously with the jinni and to acknowledge the violent passions of the id while later celebrating the success of the clever fisherman (pp. 28–34).

11. *“Spare my life and God will spare you, but kill me and be killed”:* The fisherman’s refrain is repeated throughout the first part of “The Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni,” and, as David Pinault argues, serves to tie together the frame and the embedded stories while emphasizing the theme of the story as a whole (p. 41).

12. *“I am a human, and God gave me reason”:* The story clearly contrasts the human capacity for reason with the primitive violence represented by the jinni. It suggests that God has provided this weapon to counteract the threats that these supernatural forces present. The efforts of the fisherman to manage the jinni’s rage parallel the efforts of Shahrazad in the frame tale to master the irrational jealousy and violence of the king through her wisdom and talent for storytelling.

13. *“I am inside: do you believe me now?*”: The same trick is used by a young boy in the Grimms’ fairy tale “The Spirit in the Bottle” to master a dangerous demon, and it is repeated in the animated Disney film of *Aladdin* (1992), although it does not appear in the original story of “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp” in Antoine Galland’s *Les mille et une nuits*.

14. *“You and I are like King Yunan and the wise Duban”:* The fisherman introduces the first embedded tale after the direct threat to him has disappeared. He is not telling stories to save his life in the mode of Shahrazad but instead telling stories to illustrate a lesson for the rebellious jinni.

15. *read all sorts of books:* Duban is a man of learning familiar with rare healing methods, and his association with Byzantium (mentioned later in the story) reinforces these qualities. Under the Abbasid Caliphate, Greek medical texts were translated into Arabic, and this research was extended and supplemented. Medicine and physiology were considered to be essential components of a scientific education. Some editions of the *One Thousand and One Nights* (Bulaq, Calcutta II, Leiden) also describe Duban as possessing magic powers, and the kinds of books that he possesses and his skill in astrology and plant lore may indicate that he is a practitioner of magic.

16. *“you will sit with me and share my table”:* The king promises Duban significant honors and riches if he succeeds in healing him and follows this up by giving him magnificent robes. Lane notes that it was common practice at such courts to offer rich garments to distinguished men of literature and science, as well as military officers and viziers (vol. 1, p. 105, n. 15).

17. *He fashioned a mallet:* This passage reveals Seale’s careful attention to meter and the repetition of sounds to produce a translation that captures some sense of the rhyming prose of the original Arabic.

18. *ride out to the racecourse for a game:* The sport of polo was practiced before Islam and continued to be considered permissible, despite general concerns about the morality of playing

games and a taboo against betting (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 560).

19. *he found no trace of leprosy:* This story of healing provoked the interest of readers from its very first translation into English. The writer and politician Joseph Addison related it as an exemplary tale in *The Spectator* on October 13, 1711, based on the unauthorized translations from Antoine Galland's *Les mille et une nuits* that circulated in England. With a notable lack of imagination, Addison boils it down to a lesson in the virtues of exercise and temperance rather than acknowledging the exceptional skills of the mysterious Duban.

20. *the king returned to his diwan:* In this instance, diwan refers to a royal audience chamber.

21. *envy touches every man:* Envy is perhaps the most consistent flaw among the characters of the *Nights* in both domestic and political contexts. The wicked vizier of this story may have been the model for the many versions of this character that have appeared in films based on the *Nights*. In Alexander Korda's *Thief of Bagdad* from 1940, Conrad Veidt played a classic version of this villain whose name, Jaffar, was taken from that of Caliph Harun al-Rashid's vizier, Jaafar al-Barmaki. Disney's animated movie of *Aladdin* (1992) introduced a scheming vizier named Jafar as well and gave him both magical powers and an intense jealousy of the upstart Aladdin.

22. *"regretted killing his falcon":* The king goes on to tell "The Tale of King Sindbad and the Falcon" in this translation, but in several other manuscripts of *One Thousand and One Nights*, "The Tale of the Jealous Husband and the Parrot" is included instead. It reads (in Yasmine Seale's translation):

They say that there was once a very jealous man who had a lovely wife, beautiful and good in every way, who would not let him travel from her. But once he had to make a journey and could not avoid it, so he went to the bird market, bought a parrot, and set it in his home to be his eyes and tell him what had happened in his absence. The parrot was intelligent, quick to learn and to remember, and when the husband made his journey and returned again, he asked the parrot what had happened with his wife while he was gone, and the parrot told how she behaved, what day by day she and her lover had done while he was far away. When the husband heard this, he found his wife and beat her, and she thought one of her maids had told him what had happened with her friend while he was gone. And she went to them with questions, one maid after another, and they all swore the bird was the informer, so she told one maid to take a grinder and to grind under the cage and another maid to sprinkle the cage with water and another to pace up and down all night with a steel mirror.

Her husband spent that night away, and in the morning when he came to ask the parrot what had gone on in his absence, the bird said, "Master, mercy, I could not hear or see a thing because of all the darkness, lightning, rain and thunder." But this was in the month of July, and the husband said, "It has not rained."

"It has," said the parrot. "I saw what I have said."

Deciding that the parrot was a liar and had lied about his wife, the husband in his anger tore the parrot from its cage, threw it to the ground and let it die there. But soon he learned from neighbors that the bird had told the truth, and he regretted he had fallen for his wife's device and put the bird to death, and so it is, vizier, with you and me.

23. *The Tale of King Sindbad and the Falcon:* This tale is inserted into "The Tale of King Yunan and the Wise Duban" in Egyptian manuscripts and early print editions of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Marzolph and van Leeuwen suggest it might be based on a fable from Aesop in which an

eagle warns a peasant about venom that a dragon has put in his drink (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 383).

24. *The king gave the orders:* The hunt described in the story bears some resemblance to the description provided by Jacob Burckhardt of hunting gazelles on the eastern frontiers of Syria: “An open space in the plain, of about one mile and a half square, is enclosed on three sides by a wall of loose stones, too high for the gazelles to leap over.” Gaps are left for the gazelle to enter as it is attracted to a small spring of water (Lane, vol. 1, p. 114, n. 24).

25. *The bird clawed at the creature’s eyes:* A description of hunting with hawks in Persia by Sir John Malcolm was included by Lane in his notes to this story. Malcolm noted that when the animal bolts, the hawks are quick to reach it and “pounce” at its head, “with a violence that knocks it over.” Sometimes, Lane notes, the birds are described as “pecking at the poor creature’s eyes until they blind it.” The horse and hunters then arrive to surround their unfortunate prey and make the kill (vol. 1, p. 112, n. 24).

26. *dripping water from its boughs like butter:* Seale’s translation is enhanced by her consistent attention to sound effects, as in the use of alliteration in this passage.

27. *the falcon knocked it over with a sweep of wings:* The falcon in this story becomes an emblem of wisdom and faithfulness.

28. *That is the story of King Sindbad:* The embedded story of the king and his falcon serves as an example of the consequences of repaying devoted service with violence, but it does little to dissuade the vizier from pursuing his path.

29. *And the vizier said …:* The vizier replies to the king’s story with his own story in an effort to reassure him of his good faith, but a story of a duplicitous vizier seems an odd choice in this context.

30. *found she was a ghoul:* In Arabic mythology, a ghoul is a type of evil jinni who roams the wilderness at night and is typically found in ruins and cemeteries. Ghouls eat human flesh and can assume an attractive form to lure humans into their clutches. Richard Burton identifies this creature as an “ogress” in his translation and in his note provides a list of other such monsters: the Hebrew Lilith, the classical Lamia, the Hindu Yogini and Dakini, the Chaldean desert demons Utug and Gigim, and the Baba Yaga of Russian folklore (vol. 1, p. 55, n. 1). The prince’s meeting with the ghoul is not a coincidence in this story, for the vizier has clearly conspired to send the prince to her and so to destroy him.

31. *When the ghoul heard his prayer, she let him go:* Even the ghoul must obey when God’s protection is requested by the prince.

32. *“If he has cured me with something to hold”:* The knowledge of Duban is seen as akin to a supernatural power. If wielded with good intent, it can do wondrous things, but the king cannot ignore the potential for harm that lies within it. Encouraged by the vizier, he gives in to fear.

33. *“I have brought you here to take away your life”:* By threatening the man who has saved his life, the king is behaving like the rebellious jinni toward the fisherman. He is also breaking his

promise of rewarding Duban for curing his illness. Muhsin al-Musawi argues that, in an Islamic context, breaking such vows is considered a serious offense (pp. 60–61).

34. *“kill me and be killed”:* The wise Duban speaks the same words as the fisherman to clarify the link between the embedded tale and the frame tale of the fisherman and the jinni.

35. *“It is like the reward of the crocodile”:* In a typical gambit in the tales of the *Nights*, Duban tries to delay his execution with the suggestion of another tale—giving him an opportunity to counter the stories of the vizier. However, this time a storytelling battle will not determine the course of events. Lane provides the fable of the crocodile that he believes was referenced in this line: A crocodile finds himself far from the Nile and is so exhausted and thirsty that he does not think he will be able to get back on his own. When an Arab with a camel approaches him, he begs him to tie him on the back of the camel and take him to the river, and he promises that afterward he will carry the man to the opposite bank. The Arab expresses his fear that the crocodile will simply devour him when he unties him, but the creature swears that he will fulfill his bargain, so the man agrees. When they arrive at the Nile and the crocodile is released, he turns on his benefactor and the man has to escape without his camel. The crocodile soon meets a fox and tells him his story, claiming that the man had cruelly tied him to his camel and almost killed him. The fox replies that he will capture the man for the crocodile, but he has to be sure that this retribution is just, so he needs to see what has happened first. The crocodile agrees and lets the fox tie him onto the back of the camel again and take him back to the place in the desert where the Arab had found him. When they arrive, the fox cuts the ropes that hold the crocodile on the camel and runs off with the beast, leaving the crocodile exactly where he had started (vol. 1, pp. 114–15, n. 28).

36. *“Allow me time to return home”:* As in “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni,” the wise Duban asks for time to take care of his responsibilities before he dies. The king does not seem as receptive to the argument as the jinni in that story, but he does respond to the lure of the magic book.

37. *“There is no power and no strength except in God”:* The repetition of these phrases at this critical moment seems to place the magic employed by Duban in this instance in the realm of licit rather than black magic. It will be God’s will if the king refuses to heed the warning and suffers the consequences of Duban’s plan.

38. *“Now, Majesty, open the book”:* The final lesson given by Duban’s severed head can be seen as symbolizing the victory of reason over irrational hatred and jealousy, and it parallels the fisherman’s triumph over the jinni. However, Thomas Carlyle appropriated this image in his philosophical novel *Sartor Resartus* (1836) to express his fear of excessively logical or scientific training of the mind. A mind trained in this way, he claimed, would become as dangerous as Duban’s, which was “set in a basin to keep it alive … without a shadow of a heart” (Caracciolo, p. 31).

39. *“I cannot see a written word inside this book”:* Duban’s book, one of the most famous magic objects in the *1001 Nights*, proves that his understanding extends to the esoteric practices of magic. The murder weapon mimics the logic of the cure (as the king had feared) by killing from outside the body through the transfer of poison from the object to the hands (and mouth) of the king. It is the epitome of poetic justice in the *Nights*. The absence of words in Duban’s book can only mean death in a story collection where Shahrazad’s survival depends on a continuous act of

storytelling. As Tzvetan Todorov explains in his essay on the *Nights*, “The book that tells no story kills. The absence of narrative signifies death” (p. 234). Duban’s method for murder was famously borrowed by Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose* (1980).

40. *“Had justice been their rule”:* The poem offers a direct commentary on the theme that unites this sequence of stories.

41. *“Do not do what Imama did to Atika”:* The jinni responds to the fisherman’s story of the king and the wise physician by trying to engage in a storytelling duel, but curiosity is not the fisherman’s fatal weakness.

42. *“‘Spare me and God will spare you’”:* The fisherman’s refrain is deployed once again in the hope that the lesson of the story of Duban has had the effect that the fisherman intended. In his analysis of this story, David Pinault notes that this phrase is repeated at transition points in the story (p. 53).

43. *“Follow me,” the jinni replied:* The symbolism of the jinni in the jar mingles with classical and biblical allusions in the 1944 poem by H. D., “The Walls Do Not Fall.” Writing in the midst of the London Blitz, the poet affirms the creative forces imminent in the rubble around her:

When in the company of the gods,
I loved and was loved,
never was my mind stirred
to such rapture,
my heart moved
to such pleasure,
as now, to discover
over Love, a new master:
His, the track in the sand
From a plum-tree in flower
To a half-open hut-door
(or track would have been,
But wind blows sand-prints from the sand,
Whether seen or unseen):
His, the Genius in the jar
Which the Fisherman finds,
He is Mage,
Bringing myrrh.

44. *bought all they would need:* As the jinni shows the fisherman the lake and the fish of many colors, the first part of the story is resolved and the second part begins. Some retellings of “The Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni” drop the second part of the story concerning the mystery of the fish and the lost kingdom of the Black Isles. For instance, Hanan al-Shaykh ends the story with the fisherman catching the fish in his net and realizing that they have turned into precious gems (p. 23).

45. *"Keep your word and we'll be true!":* The significance of this repeated refrain is never clarified in the story, perhaps because the original ending was lost or discarded before the tale was redeveloped in this form. It has been suggested that it is a reference to faith—and to a promise to maintain one's beliefs even under the pressure to convert.

46. *tribe of Ad:* This is a reference to a mythical Arab tribe in the south of Arabia who, according to legend, were lost in a windstorm after refusing to accept the words of a prophet. Members of the tribe of Ad were reputed to have been giants. Edward Lane claims that the smallest were supposedly sixty cubits (about ninety feet) tall, and the tallest were one hundred cubits (about 150 feet) (vol. 1, p. 116, n. 37).

47. *"This is a mystery":* As in many of the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, intense curiosity drives the plot forward. Even kings can be consumed by the need to solve a mystery. Duncan Black MacDonald believed that this was where the opening tale of "The Fisherman and the Jinni" was connected to a different story featuring events in the kingdom of the enchanted prince. The original ending of the fisherman story is unknown, so certain details (such as the apparitions in the kitchen) are never explained (Pinault, pp. 63–64).

48. *The king walked on until the shape became a palace:* The king's discovery of the palace of the Black Isles and its occupants unfolds slowly as the storyteller provides a series of details to build suspense and increase the sense of wonder in this strange setting. Pinault identifies this as a primary example of the use of "dramatic visualization" in the *Nights* (p. 65).

49. *"I am a stranger":* The king's attempt to maintain his anonymity as he investigates this mystery is similar to the way in which Caliph Harun al-Rashid roams the city in disguise in a number of *Nights* stories set in Baghdad.

50. *The palace was embellished:* The distinctive details of the furnishings and architecture of the palace are a reminder of the distinct provenance of the story. The eerie emptiness of the palace parallels other petrified cities in the *One Thousand and One Nights*—in "The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner" in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," "The City of Brass," and "Iram of the Columns." In these other *Nights* stories, the frozen life of the palace symbolizes the frailty of human endeavor before the power of God, while in "The Tale of the Enchanted Prince," the uncanny setting suggests the presence of a malevolent force.

51. *At the far end was a boy:* The attention to detail in this description is another example of the technique of dramatic visualization identified by David Pinault. Considerable attention is lavished on the physical appearance of the young man, who in the original Arabic is described using formulaic phrases in prose-rhyme. This figurative language captures the common conceptions of beauty in the medieval period for both young men and young women.

52. *"My lord, dearer than anyone I ever rose to greet":* This is the second time the seated position of the young man is mentioned, as the storyteller relates details that will finally resolve themselves in the discovery of the prince's true condition. Other stories in the *Nights* include similar moments when the characters breach the conventions of courtesy and are discovered to have suffered some physical defect or maiming (i.e., the stories of "The Tailor," "The Christian Broker," and "The Jewish Doctor" in "The Hunchback" story cycle).

53. *carve it with a needle in the corner of the eye:* This phrase is a common way of describing a particularly astonishing story in the *1001 Nights*. Abdelfattah Kilito argues that the eye and the needle are related to the page and the pen. The phrase implies, Kilito suggests, that the reading of the lessons in this tale should lead to the writing of these lessons on the pages of one's mind (pp. 105–7).

54. *married my uncle's daughter:* The story emphasizes the apparent devotion of the prince's wife, setting up a stark contrast with what is to come.

55. *"God curse our lady whore":* This incident echoes the adulterous behavior of Shahriyar's wife in the opening tale of the collection and emphasizes the shame associated with servants of the court having knowledge of such private affairs.

56. *then spit it out and made a show of sleep:* In adopting iambic pentameter for passages such as this, the poet shows through the translator. The regular rhythm brings the prose closer to spoken language and to song.

57. *she spoke some words I could not understand:* This is the first indication that the prince's wife is not just adulterous but also a secret practitioner of magic.

58. *"hurl every last stone beyond Mount Qaf":* David Pinault suggests that this declaration, which is delivered in prose-rhyme in the Arabic text, captures the flavor of ritual cursing and links the wife to practices of sorcery (p. 71). In Muslim cosmology, Mount Qaf is a mountain range that encircles the world. It lies on the far side of a great ocean and is reputed to be the home of angels and jinn.

59. *And she wept at his feet:* Marina Warner argues that Shahrazad offers Shahriyar a portrait of "love in extremis" in this story. The sorceress's devotion to the slave appears inexplicable, and her gestures of absolute submission shock her husband. The scene seems to be constructed as an extreme form of the infidelity that set Shahriyar on his violent campaign against women, and Warner asks whether Shahrazad might be trying to earn her husband's trust by showing that she understands his feelings (pp. 91–94).

60. *I failed to cut the veins:* In this moment, the prince might be expected to react just as Shahriyar and his brother did in the opening story and take his revenge as a wronged husband. The young prince certainly wants to kill his wife's lover, but he fails to do so. Reinhard Schulze argues that his metamorphosis could be read as a punishment for his failure to fulfill the expectations attendant on his social role. For his passivity in the face of decisive events, he will be imprisoned in stone—a fitting allegory of the qualities he exhibits in the story (p. 47).

61. *the House of Grief was built:* "Houses of Lamentation" were built in Muslim cemeteries to allow women to mourn their relatives in private. A similar plot device appears in "The Tale of Ghanim Ibn Ayyub," where the wife of Harun al-Rashid secretly orders the death of his favorite slave girl and then has a mock tomb built in the palace so he can mourn her. He learns of her survival by overhearing the gossip of two slave girls.

62. *"O tomb, O tomb":* The confrontation between the prince and his wife begins as an exchange of poetry in which he cruelly mocks her mournful verses.

63. *“By magic and by craft”:* The prince’s unnamed wife in this moment is revealed as perhaps the most powerful and most malevolent of magicians in the *1001 Nights*. If certain forms of the supernatural are considered commonplace within Islamic society, the evil motives and immense power of this sorceress marks her magic as utterly alien. Her form of revenge is significant thematically. Just as her lover lies in a state “between life and death,” her hated husband will be reduced to a half-human state. He will be trapped in stone—“neither among the living nor the dead.”

64. *Muslims, Magians, Christians, Jews:* Edward Lane believed that the colors used to represent the different religions of the kingdom of the Black Isles may have been related to sartorial codes in Islamic states. He notes that Christians and Jews were supposed to wear blue and yellow turbans, respectively, and that the white turban was worn by Muslims (vol. 1, p. 119, n. 55). The red of the Magians (Zoroastrians) is presumably a reference to the importance of fire in their religious practice. This attack on what would seem to have been a thriving, tolerant society reveals the irredeemable evil of a sorceress with roots in a more primeval realm. In her analysis of the story, Marina Warner interprets her as an enchantress rooted in a pre-Islamic pagan faith: “She is rather a throwback, a descendant of the witches of antiquity, a dark enchanter whose ancestors are Circe and Medea or the wild priestess who performs fumigations and incantations around Dido’s pyre in the *Aeneid*” (p. 95).

65. *threw him down a well:* This part of the king’s plan is quickly handled, ensuring that the real climax in this story will be the confrontation between the king and the sorceress.

66. *After she had whipped her husband:* This story delivers scenes of torture that point toward the horror genre, and the bloody events are interrupted by Shahrazad in an effort to increase the suspense of the moment. It is interesting that in one of the Arabic manuscripts of this story (the Leiden), the interruption of Shahrazad is more extensive than usual and comments directly on the action in a way that suggests Shahriyar’s investment in the cause of the mistreated prince. After Dunyazad compliments her sister’s tale and Shahrazad promises more, Shahriyar, who “had marveled and sorrowed over the enchanted youth, and marveled and felt grief in his heart for him,” says to himself, “By God, I will put off killing her for tonight, and the nights to come, even if it lasts two months, until I’ve heard the rest of this story and what happened to this enchanted youth. Then I’ll go back to my habits and kill her” (Pinault, p. 76).

67. *“Beloved, talk to me”:* The motif of speech is key to “The Enchanted Prince,” where a wound to the throat deprives the magician of the voice of her lover. Her need to hear him will be exploited by the king as he seeks to avenge the enchanted prince. Each element in this causal sequence is inserted in a persuasive way.

68. *filled a bowl with water, spoke over it a spell:* The procedure for casting a spell of disenchantment in this story is remarkably consistent with that in the embedded tales of “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni.”

69. *“My lord, yes, yes my love”:* The sorceress’s willingness to obey her lover in all things has been established in an earlier scene, and the king’s plan depends precisely on this. The king’s verbal orders take on unusual power as he steps into the role of a character who has been silenced.

70. *Then he drew his sword:* The sorceress's example shows the important distinction between black magic used for nefarious purposes and the magical skills demonstrated by the wise Duban in healing the king.

71. *"It is a full year's journey":* This story displays the kinds of distortions of time and space that are characteristic of the fantastic. Robert Irwin has pointed out the "imagination-enlarging function" of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, even before the genre of science fiction was reportedly inaugurated with the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818. The stories of the *Nights* contain many of the features that have become characteristic of the genre, including alien creatures, strange technologies, and alternative societies (pp. 207–8).

72. *fifty mamluks:* In this context, mamluk refers to a slave soldier. The mamluks, drawn from enslaved men captured in battle, became a powerful military class in Egypt in the medieval period.

73. *Then he sent for the fisherman:* The lowly fisherman gets the credit for the liberation of the city from the spell of the evil magician, thereby tying the two halves of the story together. For his determined efforts to master the angry jinni in the first part of the story, he finally receives great honors and riches. The connection is a bit artificial, since the two sections of the story are thematically independent, but it gives a formal unity to the tale that appears in this version.

74. *his daughters were the wives of kings:* This is a typical way of ending a *Nights* story—with the deserving characters connected through marriage to agents of wealth and power.

THE STORY OF THE PORTER AND THE THREE WOMEN OF BAGHDAD

Yasmine Seale has suggested that this is her favorite story in the collection—particularly the frame that introduces the three sisters and the distinct language they forge within their own metaphorical realm. Among the core stories of the Thousand and One Nights*, this one is arguably the best representation of the dream space created by the nocturnal storytelling of Shahrazad, and it draws in the reader with a series of intriguing and unsettling images and a spiraling series of questions. Who are these three women who live alone in the city without the need for a man? What could explain their strange behavior: the weeping and tearing of clothes, the flogging and then the comforting of the dogs? What brings three dervishes, each missing his right eye, to this strange gathering?*

The slow unveiling of the strange circumstances that lie behind these scenes makes this tale one of the most successful examples of the use of suspense in One Thousand and One Nights*. The mysteries will only be resolved under the threat of death, when the visitors are unable to check their own curiosity and thus face the penalty for violating the rules of the household. Forced to exchange the stories of their lives to survive the evening, the dervishes share tales of the brutal impact of fate's blows and the tragic consequences of extreme passions—sexual desire, jealousy, and the irresistible hunger for answers. Perhaps most significantly, they teach* *the importance of balancing curiosity with patience and discretion, in an echo of the sign posted at the entrance to the Baghdadi women's home.*

The women of Baghdad will demand the stories of the dervishes as the price for their lives, but the stories of the women will be extracted only by the authority of the caliph, for, lurking in disguise at this strange gathering, is Caliph Harun al-Rashid, along with his vizier Jaafar. The legendary caliph appears in numerous stories in the One Thousand and One Nights, *providing a historical link to Abbasid Baghdad and often initiating the storytelling in tales like this one. The caliph's habit of wandering his capital at night in search of relief from boredom or melancholy often puts him in contact with strangers whose stories he must learn, and the authority he wields allows him to bring clear resolutions to the hardships or injustices they have suffered. Harun may be a spectator, a listener, or an actor in plots in the* Nights, *but, most important, he serves as a symbol of justice and order within narratives that otherwise dwell on the unexpected twists and turns of fate and the marvels of supernatural events.*

Ramzi Choukair as the porter in Tim Supple's stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights *in Toronto (2011). Photo by Sophie Austin.*

As the tales of the two women and the three dervishes unfold under the watchful eyes of the caliph, a narrative that begins with an ordinary shopping trip to the market will expand to encompass ruined kingdoms, evil jinn, flying horses, brass automatons, magical battles, brutal punishments, and mysterious doors that must never be opened. It is easy to *be swept away by the fascinating stories that draw these characters together. The prince who stumbles into the underground abode of a jinni's captive bride. The woman whose trading voyage leads to a strange petrified city. The man shipwrecked on a magnetic mountain that draws every vessel inexorably to its destruction. The bride whose trip to the market will end in horrific violence at the hands of a jealous husband. The prince blinded from a youthful accident with a bow and arrow. If Harun intervenes in the end to restore order and make amends for what has been suffered, the events that have unfolded as both dreamscape and nightmare can never quite be encompassed by the conventional notions of reason or justice that he applies.*

THE STORY GOES, *my happy king,* that there lived in Baghdad a man, never married, who worked as a porter.[1] As he stood in the market one day, propped on his basket, a woman appeared before him[2] wrapped in a cloak of Mosul silk, her head in a veil the color of tin, scarlet boots at her feet, rainbow laces up her legs and toes in rainbow trim. And under her veil, when she lifted it, were black eyes hooded and fringed with black,[3] shapes to make a poet sing, and with sweetness in her voice she said, “Take your basket and come this way.”

The porter, hardly believing his ears, shouldered his basket in haste (“Oh happy day,” he thought, “Oh day of grace”) and followed her to the door of a house, where she knocked. To the man who came down, a Christian,[4] she gave a coin in return for an olive jug of wine, which she set in the basket and said, “This way.”

“Oh day of gifts,” said the porter. “Day of blessings, day of bliss!”

Basket held high, he followed her until she stopped at the stall of fresh fruit, where she bought pale apples and musk apples, peaches and jasmine, Ottoman quinces and Damascus lilies, cucumbers fine as reeds, lemons from the coast and citrons from the sultan, myrtle and basil and henna blossom, daffodils and chamomile, anemones and violets, and pomegranate flowers. She laid it all in the porter’s basket and said, “This way.”

He trailed her to the butcher’s, where she stopped and said, “Cut me ten pounds of meat,” and paid him its price. He gave it to her with a little charcoal, and she slipped it into the basket and said, “This way.”

The porter in a daze followed her on to the grocer’s, where she found all she needed to season and sweeten her food: olives pitted and salted, white cheese and Syrian cheese, pickles sour and sweet, and tarragon. She arranged it all in the basket and said, “This way.”[5]

Then on to the dry grocer’s, where she bought shelled pistachios, almonds and walnuts, sugarcane from Iraq, fruit leather from Baalbek,[6] roasted chickpeas, and all the seeds. She laid the lot in the basket and said, “This way.”

And he obeyed, until they came to the confectioner’s, where she piled a platter high with every sweet in the shop:[7] honey lattices and almond rings, dumplings filled with cream and spiced with musk, soap cakes, anemone floss, pudding and fritters, amber combs and ladyfingers, widows’ bread, eat-and-thanks, judge’s bites, pipes of plenty, broth of wind, and delicacies of every description. She lowered it all into the basket.

“Had you told me,” said the porter, “I would have brought a mule!”

But the woman only smiled. Then she was at the druggist’s, where she bought ten bottles of scented water[8]—lily, rose, and others—two loaves of sugar, a lump of frankincense, aloeswood, ambergris and musk, and candles of Alexandrian wax. She filled the basket with her spoils and said, “This way.”

The porter followed her, the basket on his shoulder, until she came to a tall house fronted by a wide court, with a double door of ebony inlaid with plates of gold. The woman stopped and gave a soft knock …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

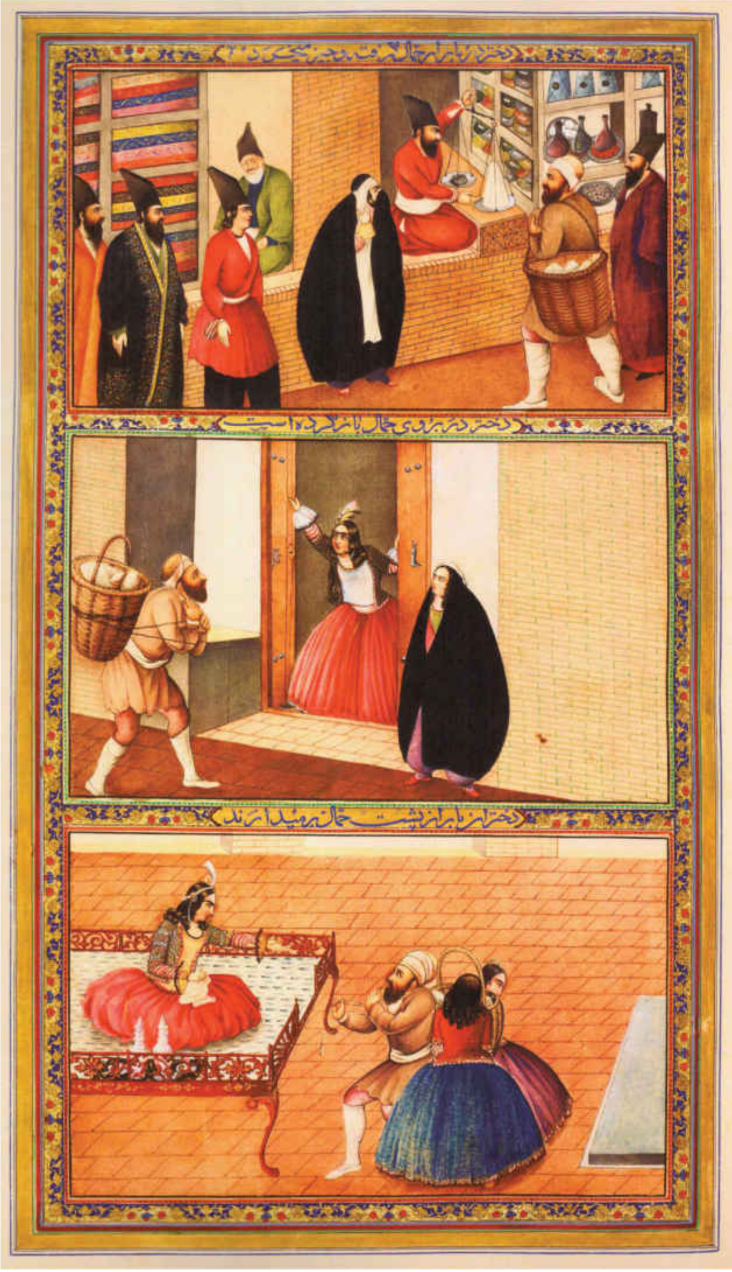
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes that as the porter stood behind the buyer at the door,[9] thinking of little but her charm, the polish of her language and the magic in her face, the doors flew open and (he bent to look) there stood a woman, five feet of symmetry and grace, a forehead like the sickle moon’s blaze, eyes like the eyes of the doe and the gazelle, brows like the crescent of Shaaban, red anemones for cheeks, a mouth like Solomon’s seal, lips red as native gold, teeth like a line of pearls, a neck like something given to a king, a fountain of a chest, pomegranate breasts, and a navel in whose dimple you could sit a drop of balm, and below was the hint of a rabbit without ears.

At the sight of this woman (we shall call her the keeper, as she kept the door), the porter nearly lost his mind, his head its load, and he thought, “Never in my life was there such a happy day.” At the keeper’s welcome, the porter followed the buyer inside,[10] and into a large hall of elegant design, with carvings and compartments, galleries and balconies, niches and benches, booths and closets with curtains drawn before them. In the middle was a pool of water where a fountain rose, and at the far end stood a bed of cypress wood and amber, set with gems and hung with a net of red silk, fixed with pearls the size of hazelnuts and larger.

Behind the net, when it parted, was a woman with glamour about her,[11] the philosopher’s grace and the full moon’s glow, Babylonian eyes and brows taut as bows, alif’s poise and amber scent and sugar lips, a face to shame the sun, a girl like a galaxy, or a dome of golden filigree, or a bride in her finery, or the glitter of tiles on the floor of a pool, or the glisten of tail in a bowl of soup.



A folio from the illustrated Persian translation of One Thousand and One Nights *in the Golestan Palace library in Tehran. The manuscript of the 1843 translation was illustrated by painter and miniaturist Sani' al-Molk and his studio. Top: The porter is hired in Baghdad's market. Middle: The porter arrives at the women's home. Bottom: The porter begs to join the women's revels. Image courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

She, the owner, rose and met her sisters in the middle of the hall. "Why do you stand there?" she said. "Lift the load off this poor man's head." Together, the keeper before him and the buyer behind, they took the basket down and emptied it. When everything was in its place (flowers to one side, fruit to the other), they gave the porter a coin and said, “Be on your way.”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes, she said, that when the porter considered these women, their beauty and wit, their abundance of wine and meat and fruit and scent and sweets, and no man among them, he was amazed.[12] When he made no movement to go, one of them said, “What is it? Have we paid you too little?” and to her sister, “Give him another coin.”

But the porter said, “The wage is more than I deserve, but the way you live concerns me, and how it is that you are here alone without a man. As a table must stand on four legs, so you three need a fourth, and as the pleasure of men falls short without women, so it is for women without men.[13] As the poet says:

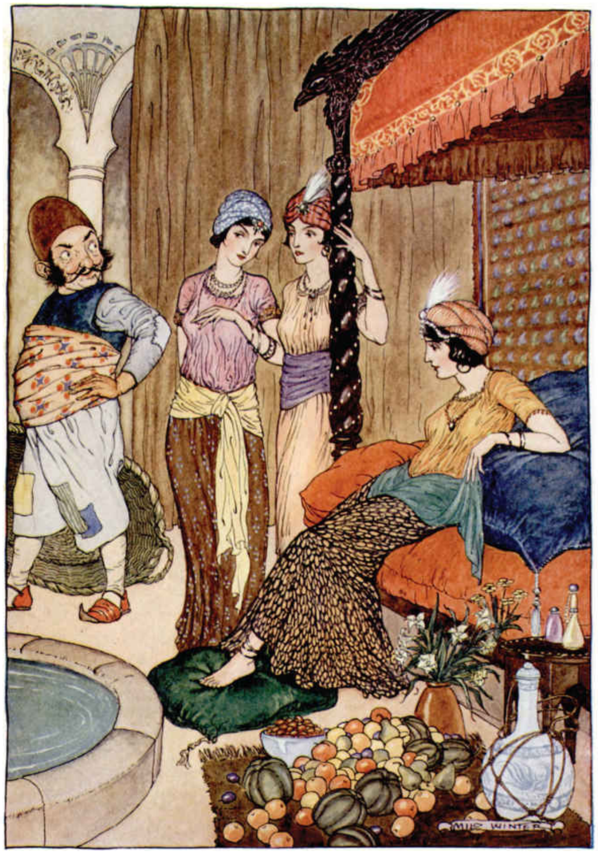
For pleasure, find these four:
Zither, lute, harp and flute.
Pair them with four more:
Myrtle, clove, blossom, rose.
Four you must include:
Wine, a lover, gold, and youth.

The women laughed and said, “Being women, we have secrets, and we fear to reveal them where they may not be kept. We have read somewhere that Ibn Tammam said:

Keep your secret. If you tell it,
You have lost it. If your own heart
Cannot hold it, how will the heart
You gave it to hold?

“Believe me,” said the porter, “I am a man of sense and care,[14] I have read books, listened and learned and cited my sources, I show what is good and conceal what is bad, and I am well behaved. I am as the poet said:

Only true souls keep a secret
Only the best heart is sealed
Secrets find in me a bolted
House: key lost and lock
Secure.



The porter in the home of the Three Women of Baghdad. Illustration by Milo Winter from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1914).*

"You know," said the women, "what this table has cost us. What have you to offer in return? We cannot let you stay, gaze at our pretty faces, and drink our wine for free."

To which the keeper added, "If you have nothing, leave with nothing."

"Sisters," said the buyer, "let him be. I swear to God he served me well today. Another man would not have been so patient. Let me pay his share."

The porter kissed the ground in thanks.

"All I have," he said, "is this coin, yours, the first I earned today. Take it back and take me, not as a companion but a slave."

"Sit," said the women. "You are welcome."

Then the buyer rose and drew a tighter loop around her waist, tidied up the room and laid the table, strained the wine, arranged the cups and bowls and beakers, the spoons of gold and silver. When the food and drink were spread at the pool's edge, she invited her sisters to sit (the porter, among them, believed himself in a dream),[15] and the first cup she filled and drank herself, a second for her sister, and a third for the other. Then she poured one for the porter, who said:

Drain the cup only
In trusted, noble
Company.
Wine is like wind:
Sweet if breezing
Over balm,
Bad if over rot
It blows.

"Drink," said the buyer, "and be well. The wine will bring you health,[16] banish the pain, and quicken the cure."

And they drank, draining and filling and draining their cups, until the porter, full of wine, fell to singing bawdy songs, began to dance, and set upon them with his teeth and fingers, pinching, prodding. One of them fought back with food, the other with words, the third with flowers, but he was in the fold of pleasure.

They went on like this until the wine played in their heads. And when drink had outdone them, the keeper rose and stepped out of her clothes, loosed her hair and let it screen her, and threw herself naked into the pool …

* * *

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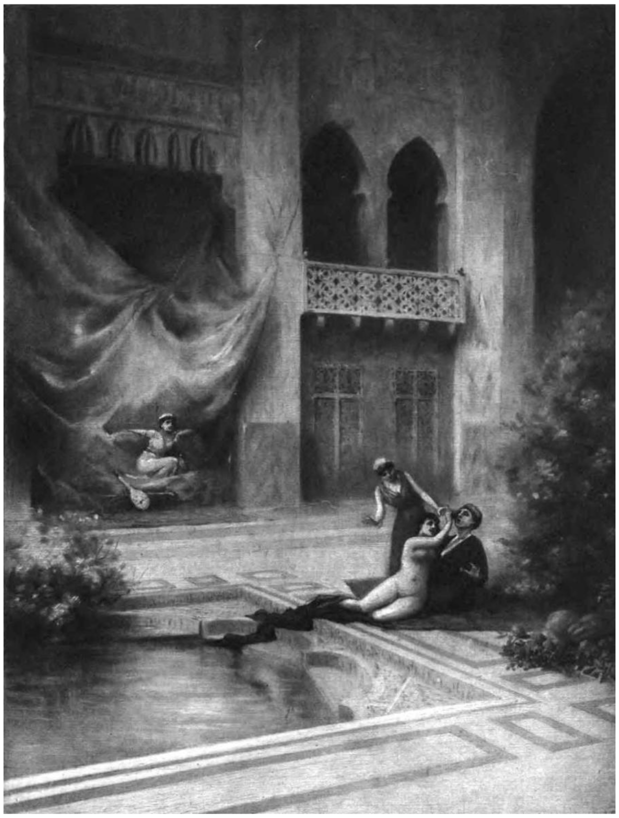
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Surfacing, the keeper danced in the spray[17] and dipped her head like a duck, filled her mouth with water and shot it at the porter, and washed her breasts and navel and between her thighs. Then she rushed out of the pool and into the porter’s lap, pointed to her heat and said, “My lord, my love, what’s this?”



“She rushed out of the pool into the porter’s lap.” Illustration by Albert Letchford, produced for the 1897 reprint of Richard Burton’s translation of the Nights. *A personal friend of Burton, Letchford trained as an Orientalist painter in Paris. In 1890, he created seventy paintings for the new edition of Burton’s provocative translation—matching the translator’s penchant for highlighting the erotic components of the stories. Letchford’s illustrations were later published in a separate volume:* A Series of Seventy Original Illustrations to Captain Sir R. F. Burton’s “Arabian Nights” *(London: H. S. Nichols, 1897).*

“Your womb,” he said.

“Whoa! You have no shame,” she said, and cuffed him on the neck.

“Your mound,” he said.

And one sister shouted, “Ugly word!” and nipped him.

“Your cunt,” he said.

And the other sister hammered at his chest to cries of “Shame!” and knocked him back.

“Your sting,” he said.

And the naked woman smacked him and said, “No.”

“Your dip,” he said, “your dingle, your disclosure.”

“No, no, no.”

And every word he said won him a slap and the same question, “What is this?” as this one hammered, that one pinched, the other prodded him, until at last he said, “What is its name?”

“Basil of bridges,”[18] she said.

“Basil of bridges! You could have told me sooner—ow!”

The cup was passed around.

Then the buyer rose, stripped as her sister had done, threw herself naked into the pool, dipped her head like a duck, and washed her belly and around her breasts, between the thighs. Then she rushed out of the pool into the porter’s lap and said, “Heart of my heart, what’s this?”

“Your mound,” he said.

She gave him a blow to shake the room and said, “You have no shame.”

“Your womb,” he said.

And one sister shouted, “Ugly!” with a slap.

“Your sting,” he said.

And the other sister cuffed him and said, “Whoa! No shame at all.”

They went on like this: One pricked, another swatted, that one elbowed him as he kept trying (cunt, womb, dip) and they said, “No, no, no.”

“Basil of bridges!” he cried at last, and all three women laughed until they fell, then came down on his neck with blows harder than ever and said, “No.”

“What is its name?” he said.

“The sesame seed, we call it.”

“Hallelujah! The sesame seed!”

The buyer dressed and they sat back to drink, the porter moaning at the pain in his shoulders and his neck. Then the owner, the most beautiful, removed her clothes in turn as the porter rubbed his neck and pleaded, “For the love of God, my neck, my shoulders….”

The woman dove and disappeared into the pool. The porter’s eyes settled on her naked form, which was like a slice of moon, and on her face, which was both full moon and yellow dawn, and took in her full length, her breasts and heavy dancing hips, bare as her Lord had made her. He let out a long “Oh” and said these lines:

If I compare your figure to the tender
Green bough, the lie oppresses me
For boughs all robed in leaf are lovelier
But you unrobed are loveliest to see

The woman, at these words, rushed out of the pool and into the porter's lap, pointed to her heat, and said, "Light of my eyes, my little liver, what is this?"

"Basil of bridges," he said.

"Bah!"

"Sesame seed," he said.

"Uff!"

"Your womb," he said.

"Yoh! So little shame," she said, and came down on his neck.

To make the story short, *my king*, it went like this: The porter said, "Its name is so-and-so," and she said, "No, no, no," and when he had his fill of bites and blows, when his neck was bruised and swollen, he said, "Well, what is its name?"

"Hotel happiness," she said.

"Hotel happiness!"

She rose and dressed, and they passed the cup between them for a while. At last the porter stood, took off his clothes (a dangling thing between his thighs), and leapt into the pool…

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes, *my king*, that when the porter went into the water, he washed himself under the beard and arms, then he rushed out and fell into the owner’s lap, arms in the arms of the keeper and legs in the hands of the buyer, pointed to his penis, and said, “Ladies, what is this?”

The women laughed, happy that his mischief agreed with theirs.

“Your cock,” said one.

And he said, “Ugly! Shame!”

“Your penis,” said another.

“Have some shame!”

“Your stick,” the other ventured.

“No!”

“Your highness.”

“No!”

“Your thing, your sack, your load?”

And he said, “No, no, no.”

“What is its name?” they asked.

But he came down on one with kisses, one with squeezes, one with nails, and one with teeth. The women fell over laughing and said, “Brother, what is its name?”

“Don’t you know?” said the porter. “It is called the Roving Mule.”

“What is the meaning of this name?”

“It is the one who grazes on the basil of bridges, eats the sesame seed, and runs wild in Hotel Happiness!”

They fell back laughing and went on drinking until night. When it was dark, the women said to the porter, “It is time to put on your slippers and show us the breadth of your back.”

“To part with my soul,” he said, “would be easier. Let us join the night to day and go our own way in the morning.”

“Sisters,” said the buyer, “let him stay tonight and let us laugh and take our pleasure with him. He is full of wit and mischief and we may not live to meet his like again.”

“You can stay,” they said, “on one condition: that you submit to our command and that, no matter what you see, you ask no questions.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” he said.

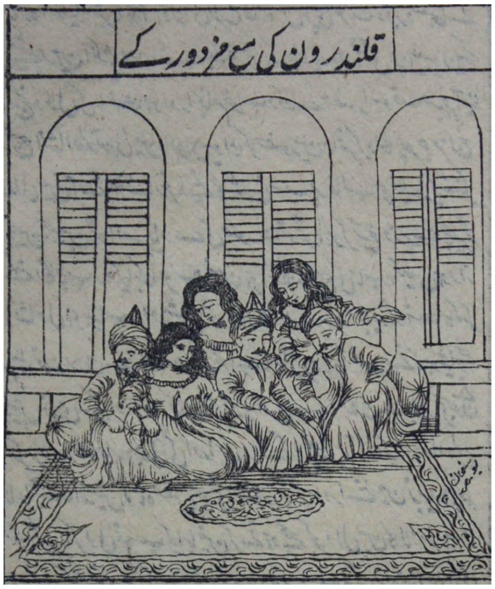
“Now get up,” they said, “and read what it says above the door.” He went to the door and found written above it in letters of gold:

SPEAK OF WHAT CONCERNS THEE NOT[19]
AND BURNING EARS SHALL BE THY LOT

And the porter said, “I promise.”

Then the buyer put the feast together. When they had eaten, they lit the candles, spiked the wax with amber and burned the aloeswood. And when the fruit and wine were served, they sat again to drink. There they stayed for an hour, drinking and talking and lazing and laughing, until they heard a knock at the door. The women were not disturbed, but one of them rose to answer and said on her return, “Our pleasure tonight will be complete.”

“How so?”


قلندرون کی مع مزدور کے

The three one-eyed dervishes are welcomed. Illustration from an Urdu edition of the Nights, *translated by Muhammad Hamid ‘Ali Khan (Lucknow, 1890). David Nathan-Maister, by permission.*

“At the door,” she said, “are three dervishes, each with a shaven head and face and blind in the right eye[20] (the strangest sight!) and by the look of them, they have traveled far to reach Baghdad. Evening gained on them and, being strangers, they have nowhere to sleep, and have come to ask the master of the house if he might give them shelter. Each of them, sisters, has a face to make a mourning mother laugh. Why don’t we let them in, amuse ourselves tonight, and see them off tomorrow?”

Her sisters were persuaded, on the condition the men ask no questions. She disappeared, satisfied, and returned with three beardless, half-blind men who greeted them, bowed low, and stood back. But the women rose to welcome them, gave thanks for their safety, and invited them to sit. The dervishes bowed again and looked around the room at the table spread with food, the burning candles, smoking incense, fruit and wine, the women without veils, and said, “By God, this is good.”

When they saw the porter sprawled and spent, sore after the beating he had taken, they said, “Is he one of us?”

“Arab? Other?”

“A wanderer, no doubt.”

Straightening, the porter glared at them and said, “None of your business. Have you not seen the words above the door? ‘Speak of what concerns thee not and burning ears shall be thy lot,’ and yet you wag your tongues as soon as you are in.”

“Mercy,” they said. “Our heads are in your hands.”

The women laughed, made peace among the men, fed the dervishes, and sat around to drink, the keeper filling their cups. Until the porter said, “Friends, have you no story to tell us?”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

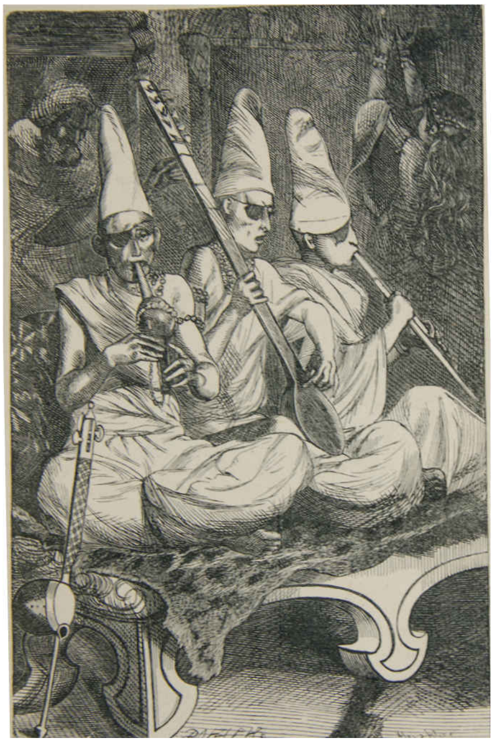
The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes that the dervishes, warm with wine, called for musical instruments. The keeper brought them a tambourine, a flute, and a Persian harp, and each man chose an instrument and tuned it. They began to play,[21] and the women sang with them until they roared. Amid the din came a knock at the door, and the keeper went to look.

Now the reason for that knock, *my king*, was this. On that very night, Caliph Harun al-Rashid[22] had gone into the city with Jaafar, his vizier, as was their custom. They happened to pass the house, and they caught the strains of music and the women's laughter. The caliph said, "Jaafar, I want to meet the people in this house."



The dervishes begin to play. Illustration by Arthur Boyd Houghton from The Arabian Nights' Entertainments *by George Fyler Townsend (London, 1860). Houghton played an important role in the revitalization of wood-engraving techniques in Victorian book illustration and was strongly influenced by the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.*

"Commander of Believers," said Jaafar, "these are people drink has taken over. They don't know who we are, and I fear we may find trouble at their hands."

"But I must see them," said the caliph. "Find a ruse to get us in."

And Jaafar said, "So be it."

He knocked at the door, and when the keeper opened it, he kissed the ground and said, "My lady, we are merchants[23] from Mosul and have been in Baghdad for ten days, lodging at a khan. But tonight, a merchant of your city asked us to his home and gave us food and drink, and we gave ourselves to pleasure, called for singers and musicians and they came.

There we stayed to watch the women sing and beat the tambourines and play the flute, and it was very sweet, until we were surprised by the police and tried to flee over the wall. Some of us got hurt and were detained, and some escaped. We have come to beg for refuge in your house, for we are strangers in the city, afraid to be outside while we are drunk, and our khan will not be open before dawn. If you are kind and take us in, God will reward you."

The keeper, seeing they were dressed with care, repeated Jaafar's story to her sisters. They softened and said, "Let them in."

When the caliph and Jaafar entered the hall, the women rose to greet them….

* * *

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When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

"Welcome," said the women. "One condition."

"What condition?"

"That you be eyes without tongues,[24] and ask no questions about what you see."

They agreed, the women were pleased, and the company fell to their seats and drank deep. The caliph was amazed by the three dervishes, each blind in the right eye, and by the beauty of the women, how fluently they spoke and how freely they gave, and the splendor of their home by contrast with the dervishes (a three-eyed band of six!). He burned to know but could not ask.

All the while, the talk and drink ran on,[25] the dervishes made music, and the cups were passed around. When the wine had done its work, the owner rose and bowed and took the buyer by the hand.

"Sister," she said, "let us do our duty."

So the keeper picked the peels and shells off the table, replaced the incense, cleared the middle of the hall, and sat the dervishes on one side and the caliph on the other. To the porter she cried, “Lazy! Come and help me. You are no stranger but a member of the house.”

The porter, tightening his belt, said, “What shall I do?”

“Stand where you are.”

Then the buyer set a chair in the hall’s center, opened a closet, and said to the porter, “Give me a hand.”

The caliph (Assaad Bouab) is amazed by the dervishes. Rehearsals in Fez for Tim Supple’s adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights. *Photo by Sophie Austin.*

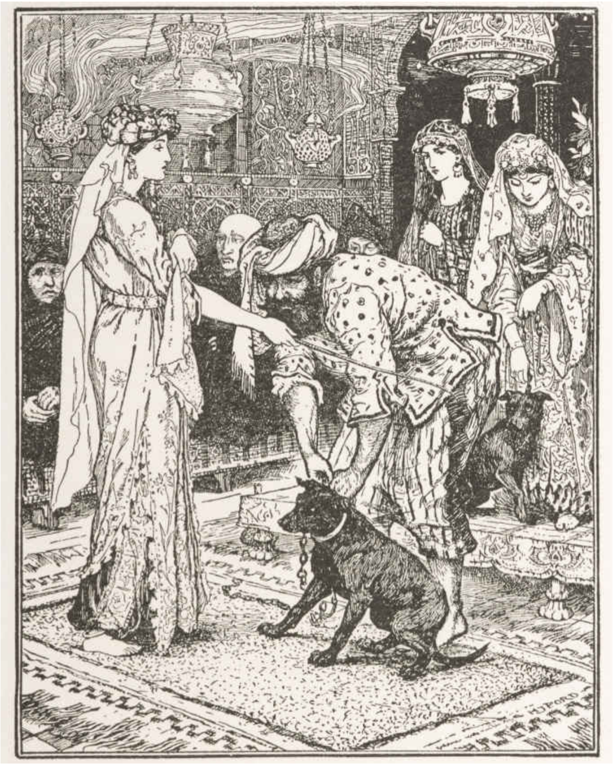
In the closet he saw two black dogs with chains around their necks. He took them out and led them to the middle of the hall.

“It is time to do our duty,” said the owner, rolling up her sleeves and picking out a braided whip. To the porter she said, “Bring me a dog.”

He dragged one forward, the dog weeping and shaking her head at the woman, who came down on her with hard blows and beat the howling dog until her arm was sore.[26] Then she dropped the whip and, taking the chain from the porter, held the dog to her chest. They cried together for a while.

Then the owner dried the dog’s tears and kissed her head. To the porter she said, “Take her back and bring me the other.”

The porter did as he was told, and the mistress did to the second dog what she had done to the first, then told the porter to return her to her sister.



The owner asks the porter to bring a dog. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

And when they saw the woman beat the dog to fainting, then weep and kiss her head, the visitors were stunned and fell to whispers. The caliph’s heart burned in his chest[27] to understand, and he motioned to Jaafar, but Jaafar motioned back that now was not the time.

Then, *my king*, when the owner was done with beating, the keeper said to her, “Now on the bed, and let me do my duty.”

“Yes,” she said, and climbed onto the bed (caliph to her right, dervishes and porter to her left), and though the lamps and candles glowed, though the air was sweet with smoke, a darker mood hung on the men …

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes, *my king*, that the keeper sat on the chair and said to her sister, the buyer, “Give me my due.”

The buyer rose, disappeared into a chamber, and brought out a bag of yellow satin with tassels of green silk and beads of amber. Sitting before the keeper, she slid out of it a lute and laid it in her lap, tuned it, and began to play and sing:

You are what I
Crave and desire.[28]
Your company,
Eternal sun.
Your absence fire.
You are my whole
Life’s craze, the one
Thing in my mind.
Love is no crime.
The shirt of pain
I wore laid bare
The grief within.
My wet cheeks aired
The love I hid.
Secrets undone
By tell-tale sobs.
Cure me of this
Hard agony.
You are its cause

And remedy.
Your healing hand
Inflames the hurt.
Your bright eyes are
The gold I hoard,
Your rosy cheeks,
Assassins. Your
Hair is my jail.
The game is up.
A martyrdom
Of love is mine.
Death by sweet swords.
How many fine
Souls meet the same
Sharp, tender blade?
I will not stop
Loving nor seek
Relief. Love is
My law, my drug
Inside and out.
Happy the eyes
That looked at you
And won a look
Returned. Now I
Am burning, lost.

When her song was done, the keeper gave a cry. “Oh, oh, oh,” she moaned, and tore her dress apart from neck to hem and fell, all bared and fainting, to the ground. On her body, head to toe, the caliph saw the marks of blows and lashes,[29] skin all black and blue. He said to Jaafar, “I can wait no longer. I must know why these scars, why the beating of the dogs, and why the dervishes.”

But Jaafar said, “Remember: they made it a condition that we ask no questions.”

Then the buyer rose, slid into the chamber, came out with a dress, and slipped it on her sister to replace the one she tore. Then her sister said, “Get me a drink,” so she filled the cup and brought it to her. Then the buyer took the lute into her lap again and sang:

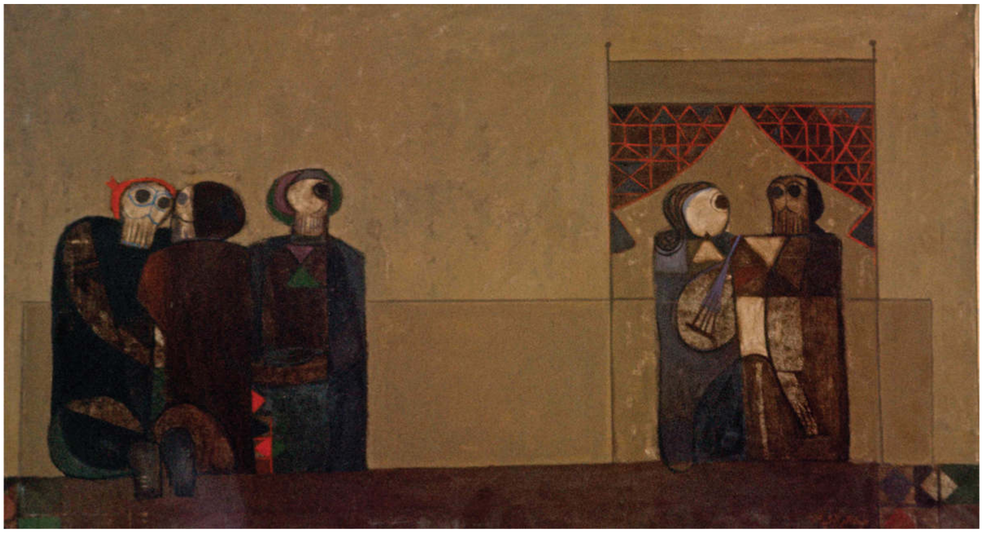
If I were to complain, what would I say?
Or tried to look for love—which way?
Or sent a messenger to tell my tale,
Who could translate this ache?
If I attempted patience—no
Forbearance after love has flown.
Nothing but regret and grief
And tears on cheeks.
You, now far from sight,
Will in my heart remain.
Was it not you who taught me
How to love, and all my life
From love’s oath not to stray?

When her sister’s song was done,[30] the girl cried “Oh, oh, oh,” and, overcome, tore her dress from neck to hem and fell, still moaning, to the ground. Then the buyer went back to the chamber, came out with a dress finer than the first, scattered rosewater over her sister’s face until she rose, then slipped the dress on her. “Sister,” said the keeper, “finish me off: only one song remains.”

And the buyer said, “With pleasure,” took the lute, and plucked the strings and sang:

How much longer must I face
This scorn, this turning back?
Have I not wept enough?
For how long will I suffer
Your neglect, savage as hunger?
Have you not had enough?
Be kind to me: contempt is hard

To take, master. The time has come
To treat me better.
Gentlemen, Have mercy on my heart.
All sleep and patience gone.
Is it the law of love
That I should be alone
While others love?
Oh lord, let him be cruel.
I am not done.



Painting by Dia al-Azzawi, 1967; printed with the permission of the artist.

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The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

When the keeper heard the third song, she cried out, "Oh that's good," and tore her dress and fainted to the ground, revealing on her chest the marks and scars of beating.

“If only,” said the dervishes, “we had not come. Better to have slept on heaps of trash than spoil our evening with this sight.”

The caliph said, “How so?”

“Dear man,” they said, “we are preoccupied by what we see.”

“Are you not members of the house?” the caliph asked. “Can you tell me the story of the two black dogs and of this girl?”

“We know nothing,” said the dervishes. “We never saw this place before tonight.”

The caliph was amazed and said, “The man beside you will know more.”

The dervishes winked at the porter and asked him what he knew.

“In love are all alike!” the porter said. “I was born in Baghdad but never in my life did I enter this house before today. The time I spent with them is wonderful and strange, and I am still amazed that here are women without men.”

“We took you to be one of them,” they said, “but now we find you are like us.”

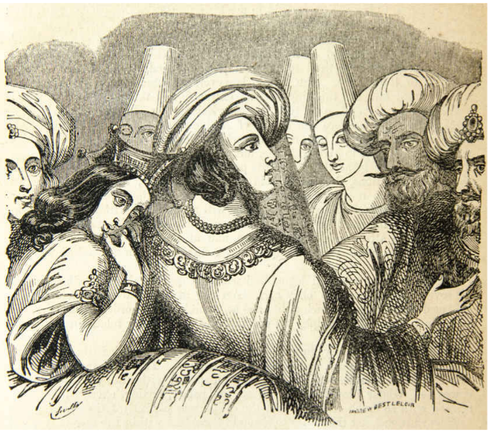
“We are seven,” said the caliph, “the women only three. Let us put our questions to them. If they do not answer freely, they will answer by force.”

All the men agreed but Jaafar,[31] who said, “This is not right. Let the women be (we are their guests on a condition we promised to keep), and let us hold our tongues, for little remains of the night and each of us will soon go his own way.”

And to the caliph he whispered, “This is the last hour of the night. Tomorrow I will bring these girls before you and have them tell their story.”

But the caliph said, “I cannot wait. The dervishes will ask them.”

“This is not right,” said Jaafar.



"The visitors fought over who should ask." Illustration from the 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, *translated by Edward Forster from Galland's* Les mille et une nuits.

The company fought over who should ask, at length agreeing on the porter, when the women heard their clamor and said, "What is the matter?"

The porter came forward and said to the owner, "My lady, these men beg you to tell them why the dogs (why you beat them, why you kiss them and weep), and they wish to know the story of your sister, and why she was flogged with a whip like a man."

To the men, the woman said, "Is this true?"

"Yes," they said. (Not Jaafar: he said nothing.)

"This is bad," the owner said. "Did we not tell you our condition? Was it not enough that we let you in our home and fed you with our food? And still you dare to ask! Oh, you have wronged us."

She rolled up her sleeves, struck the floor three times, and cried, "Be quick!"

Then a door opened, and out came seven slaves with swords. Each of them fell on a guest, struck his face and threw him to the ground, and tied their arms behind their backs and bound them to each other.

"Command us," they said, "to cut off their heads!"

"Wait," the owner said. "I have questions."[32]

"My lady," said the porter, "do not kill me for another's crime. All these men have done you wrong but me. Our day began so well, and our night would have been sweeter still without those dervishes, who have only to enter a city to ruin it!"

And he wept and said these lines:

How fine is the forgiveness of the strong
And finer when it falls on weaker hearts
If friendship ever was a sacred bond
Do not cast off the first friend for the last

The woman laughed in spite of her anger. To the men she said, “Tell me who you are and make it quick (you have only a little to live). This much is clear to me: If you did not have power, money, or importance, you would not have dared to cross us.”

“For God’s sake,” said the caliph to Jaafar, “tell her who we are, or we shall be murdered by mistake.”

“As we deserve,” said Jaafar.

“Enough wit.”

Then the owner approached the dervishes and said, “Are you brothers?”

“No,” they said, “nor are we beggars.”

“Were you born,” she said, “with one bad eye?”

“No,” said one, “the strangest twist of fate has brought me to this state. If you were to carve it with a needle in the corner of the eye,[33] it would be a warning to the wise.”

The others, when she asked, gave the same answer.

“Each of us,” they said, “is from a different city, and each is the son of a king.”

“Then each of you,” she said, “will tell his story. Those who do can pass their hand over their head and go in peace, and those who don’t shall lose it….”[34]

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The story goes that the first to come forward was the porter, who said, “My lady, you know that I am here because I am a porter, who was hired by this buyer, who led me from the vintner to the butcher, from the butcher to the grocer, from the grocer to the fruit seller, from the fruit seller to the dry grocer, and on to the confectioner, then to the druggist, then to this house. That is my story.”

“Pass your hand over your head,” she said, “and go.”

Then the first dervish came forward and said….

THE TALE OF THE FIRST DERVISH

MY LADY, I will tell you how I came to lose an eye and shave my beard. My father was a king. He had a brother, also a king, who had a son and a daughter. As the years went by and we grew older, I would visit my uncle and stay with him a month or two before returning to my father. Between my uncle’s son and me, there grew a bond of love.

On one of my visits, he was kinder than ever, slaughtered many sheep for me and gave me wine, and sat with me to drink. When the wine had overcome us,[35] he said, “Cousin, there is a scheme I have been plotting for a year. Let me tell you about it.”

“I am listening,” I said.

He made me swear not to betray him, then he left me for a while and came back with a woman, covered up from head to toe, her perfume headier than wine.

“Cousin,” he said, “take this woman to the cemetery and find this tomb (he told me where) and I will meet you there.”

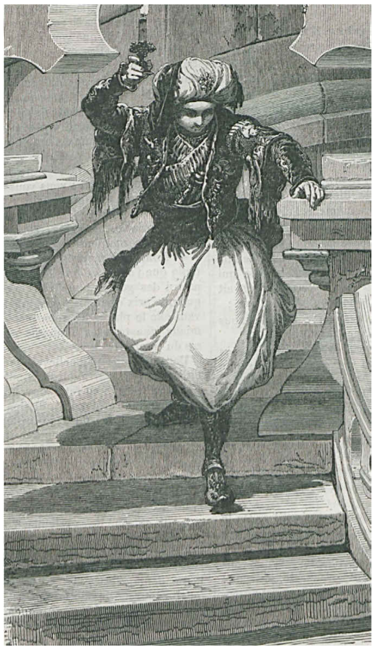
I, unable to protest, agreed, and took the woman to the tomb and waited for my cousin, who arrived with a bowl of water, a bag of mortar, and an axe. With the axe he broke open the tomb and set the stones aside. Then he dug into the earth until he came upon an iron plate, the size of a small door, long and wide as the tomb. He lifted up the plate, and under it appeared a spiral staircase, and to the woman he said, “The choice is yours.”

And she went down the steps and disappeared.

“Cousin,” he said to me at last, “a final favor.”

“What?”

“When I go down,” he said, “put back the iron plate and cover us with earth….”[36]



“When I go down put back the iron plate and cover us with earth.” Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

* * *

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I did as I was told, still drunk, and returned to spend the night in one of my uncle's houses, which he had given me to use while he was on a hunt. When I awoke, and recalled the events of the night before, I thought it had all been a dream and could not be sure. But when I asked about my cousin, nobody could tell me where he was, so I went back to the cemetery, tomb to tomb, but could not find the one and stayed there wandering, not even stopping to eat or drink, until night. The details of the previous night returned to me as one recalls a dream.

In the morning, after little food and sleep, I was back in the cemetery, trying to recall what he and I had done, but I could not find the tomb. I went back a third day and a fourth, with no more luck, until I felt I may go mad, and I saw no better course than to go home to my father. But as soon as I was there and through the city gates, I was detained and bound.

"What is this?" I protested.

I was told that the vizier had turned against my father, won the army to his side and had him killed, had taken power, and had given his guards the order to lie in wait for me. At this news I fainted and was taken to him.

Now I should say, my lady, that the vizier and I were enemies, since I had taken out his eye—an accident! You see, I had a crossbow, loved to shoot at birds, and was on the palace roof one day when I saw a bird land on the vizier's own roof, where the vizier happened also to be standing. But my arrow missed the bird and hit the man, and pierced his eye, which dangled down onto his chest. That was why he hated me.

When I was before him, he set upon me with his finger,[37] thrust it in my eye, and gouged it out, and let it ooze onto my cheek. Then he had me bound and thrown into a chest, and he gave me to my father's executioner.

"Take this man," he said, "on your best horse to the desert, kill him and leave his body to the beasts and birds."

The executioner obeyed. When we reached the desert, he dismounted, removed me from the chest, and was on the point of murder when he saw me weep. Then he wept too, and with my eyes on him I said these lines:

I thought you were the shield to keep me safe
Against the spearman's dart. You were the spear.
I sought your help in danger, as the left

Arm seeks the right. Now stand away and let
The spearman aim. For if you must disown
Our friendship, please: do not side with my foe.

The executioner, soft with pity, set me free. “Run away,” he said, “and don’t come back, or they will kill us both. As the poet says:

If you suffer, save your soul.
Leave the house to mourn its builder.
Nothing lost: there will be other
Homes, no second you.
Do not entrust your mission
To another but your self,
Your truest friend.
Nothing swells the lion’s neck
But his own breath,
His best defense.

I kissed his hand, hardly believing I was safe, the loss of my eye no longer such a hardship beside the death I had escaped. I slowly made my way back to my uncle’s city and told him what had happened to my father and my eye. “I have worries of my own,” he said. “My son is missing and I have no news of him.”

He wept, reviving my old grief, until I could not hold my tongue and told him what his son had done.

“Take me to the tomb,” he said.

“Uncle,” I said, “I have lost the way.”

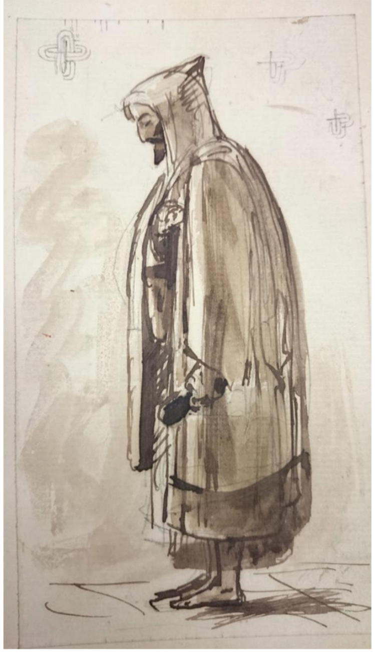
“Let us go together,” he said.

We stole into the cemetery, and there (a thrill of recognition) was the tomb! We stepped inside and swept away the earth and found the iron plate. Down the stairs we went, my uncle ahead, and after fifty steps we met a cloud of smoke.

“There is no power,” said my uncle, “and no strength except in God!”

At the bottom of the stairs was a hall, which led us to a room held up by pillars, lit by shafts that looked out to the sky. All around the place were jars and sacks of flour and grain, and at the far end of the room there was a bed, covered by a canopy that hung down to the ground. When my uncle lifted it, he found his son in the arms of the girl who had led him down, but they had turned to charcoal, as if they had been cast into a raging fire.

The sight appeared to bring my uncle joy. He spat in his son's face and said, "This is your punishment on earth,[38] and there are more to come."



Sketch by English artist Joseph Bonomi from his time in nineteenth-century Egypt. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

Then he removed one of his shoes and struck his son across the cheek …

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

When I saw my uncle strike his son across the face, I said, “Has he not suffered enough?”

“Listen,” said my uncle, “since he was a boy this son of mine was in love with his sister. I kept them apart (only children, so I told myself) but when they were older, they did the deed and I found out. I took my son aside and said, ‘Watch out, or your disgrace will be recorded in the lives of kings until the end of time, and your shame will travel in the mouths of travelers to other lands, and what you did will be remembered under another sun. Beware: She is your sister. God has forbidden her to you.’”[39]

“And I did what I could to divide them,” my uncle said, “but the girl loved him too, for the devil in her mind had made her think that this was good. To escape my interference, my son must have designed this place below the earth and furnished it like this, and dug this well, and carried down all they would need. Then they must have waited for me to go away to hunt and came down here together as you saw them do, thinking that they were safe to give each other pleasure for a long time, and that God would forget them.”

My uncle wept, and I with him.

“You will be my son instead,” he said.

He thought of what had happened to his son and daughter, and the murder of his brother, and the gouging of my eye, and he let his tears run free (as I did mine) over the trials of life and the world’s sorrows. Then we climbed out of the tomb, and I replaced the stones and iron plate over my cousins, and we crept back to the palace undiscovered.

But hardly had we settled when a clattering came from outside (drums and trumpets, men and horses) and the world became a cloud of dust. When, in our bewilderment, we asked what we had missed, we were told that the vizier who had deposed my father had raised his armies, swelled them with nomads, and descended on us like as many grains of sand, impossible to count and to withstand. They took the city by surprise so that its people, helpless to resist, surrendered.

My uncle was killed, and fearing I would perish too, I fled the city. My sorrow was renewed as I considered what had happened to my uncle and my father and my cousins and my eye, and I wept bitter tears.

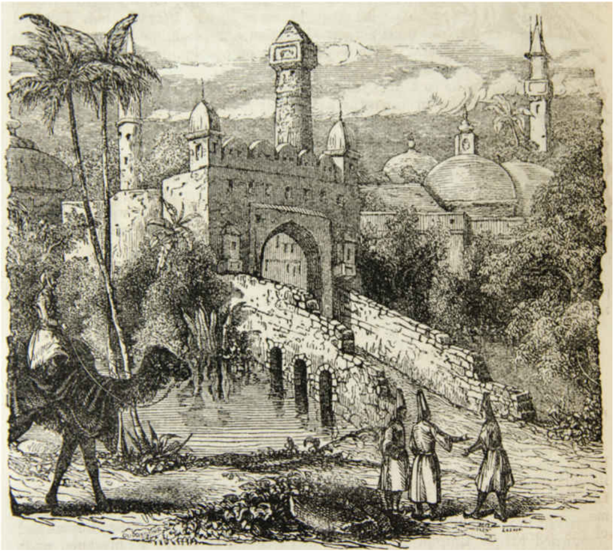
What could I do? If I were to show my face, all my father's soldiers would know me as they know the sun, and would be quick to kill me to win the vizier's favor. I could see no better way to save my life than to shave off my beard and eyebrows, change my clothes for rags, and live the dervish life.[40]

In this guise, unrecognized, I left my father's city and journeyed to this country with Baghdad in mind, hoping for a change of luck, dreaming I might even find my way into the presence of the caliph,[41] Commander of Believers, and tell him my tale.

This very night I reached the city gates, uncertain where to turn, when this dervish by my side approached me, looking like he too had traveled far, and I said, "Stranger?"

"Yes," he said, and I said I was too, when another dervish (this man here) came up to us and said, "I am a stranger." And we said, "So are we."

We roamed together in the night until, guided by fate, we found ourselves outside your house, and you were kind enough to let us in.



The dervishes meet outside Baghdad. Illustration from the 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, *translated by Edward Forster.*

* * *

"PASS YOUR HAND over your head," the owner said, "and go."

“Let me stay,” said the first dervish, “to hear the stories of my friends….”

The story goes, *my happy king*, that all who heard it marveled at the tale of the first dervish, and the caliph said to Jaafar that he had never heard a stranger story in his life. Then the second dervish came forward and said …

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF THE SECOND DERVISH

My lady, I was not born one-eyed. My father was a king, and he taught me the Qur’an according to the seven schools. I studied law with scholars,[42] Arabic and its grammar, the art of speaking and of writing, and I gave myself to learning until my mind was the first of its age and my name was on the lips of kings.

When the king of India heard of me and pressed my father with rare gifts to send me to his court, my father saw me off with a convoy of six horses. We took the postal road, and made our way for a full month until one day a cloud of dust flew up around us for a while, then scattered to reveal a band of fifty horsemen, lions shooting scowls and cased in steel….

* * *

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When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The Second Dervish (Tewfik Jallab) begins his tale. Tim Supple’s stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights *in performance at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann.*

They were highwaymen,[43] and at the sight of our small company, our camels piled with gifts, they trained their blades on us and charged. We tried to tell them we were messengers to the great king of India and could not be harmed, but they said this land was not his and not subject to him, and they killed all my men.

I escaped with a deep wound, the riders having turned their minds to loot, and I wandered, not knowing where to go, a mighty man brought low….

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

I went on until I met a mountain, where I slept in a cave, then wandered until night, eating plants and fruit. I traveled like this for a month until I reached a city, bright and peopled and safe,[44] a city frost had fled and spring had lit with roses, and set the rivers babbling, and filled the birds with song. I was happy, entering this city, and worn out by the road and pale with care. Another man entirely (my face and hands and feet all filthy) and uncertain where to turn, I entered the shop of a tailor, who returned my greeting and, detecting in my manner the trace of better days, welcomed me in and sat me down and asked me for my story.

I told him my adventure, first to last, and he softened and said, “Hide your secret. The king of this city is your father’s great enemy. There is a blood feud between them.”

Then he brought me food, we shared it, and when evening came, he cleared a corner of his shop and made me a bed and saw to my needs. I stayed with him for three days, then he asked me a question.

“Have you no skill with which to earn a living?”

“I am a scholar trained in law,” I said, “in letters and in poetry, grammar and calligraphy.”

“Your trade,” he said, “is worthless in these parts.”

“But I know nothing else.”

“Then roll up your sleeves, take an axe and a rope, and go and cut wood in the wild for your bread. If you want to live, tell no one who you are.”

He bought me an axe and a rope and turned me over to a group of woodcutters. I went out with them, cut wood all day, brought it back on my head, and sold it for half a dinar, which I gave to the tailor. In this way I spent a year.

As I went into the wild one day,[45] deeper than before, I found a meadow thick with trees and stitched with silver rills. And as I went in deeper, I came upon the stump of a great tree, and I dug around it with my axe until it struck a ring fixed to a plank of wood. I lifted it and stairs appeared beneath.

I went down the steps,[46] and at the bottom was a palace of strong build and elegant design. Inside was a woman like the rarest pearl, whose speech was balm for any wound and magnet to the wise. She was five feet high, and firm and soft and fair, and her face shone bright through the night of her locks and her teeth flashed pearly white …

* * *

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When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The woman said, “Are you man or jinni?”

“I am a man,” I said.

“What brought you to this place? In twenty-five years, I have not seen another soul.”

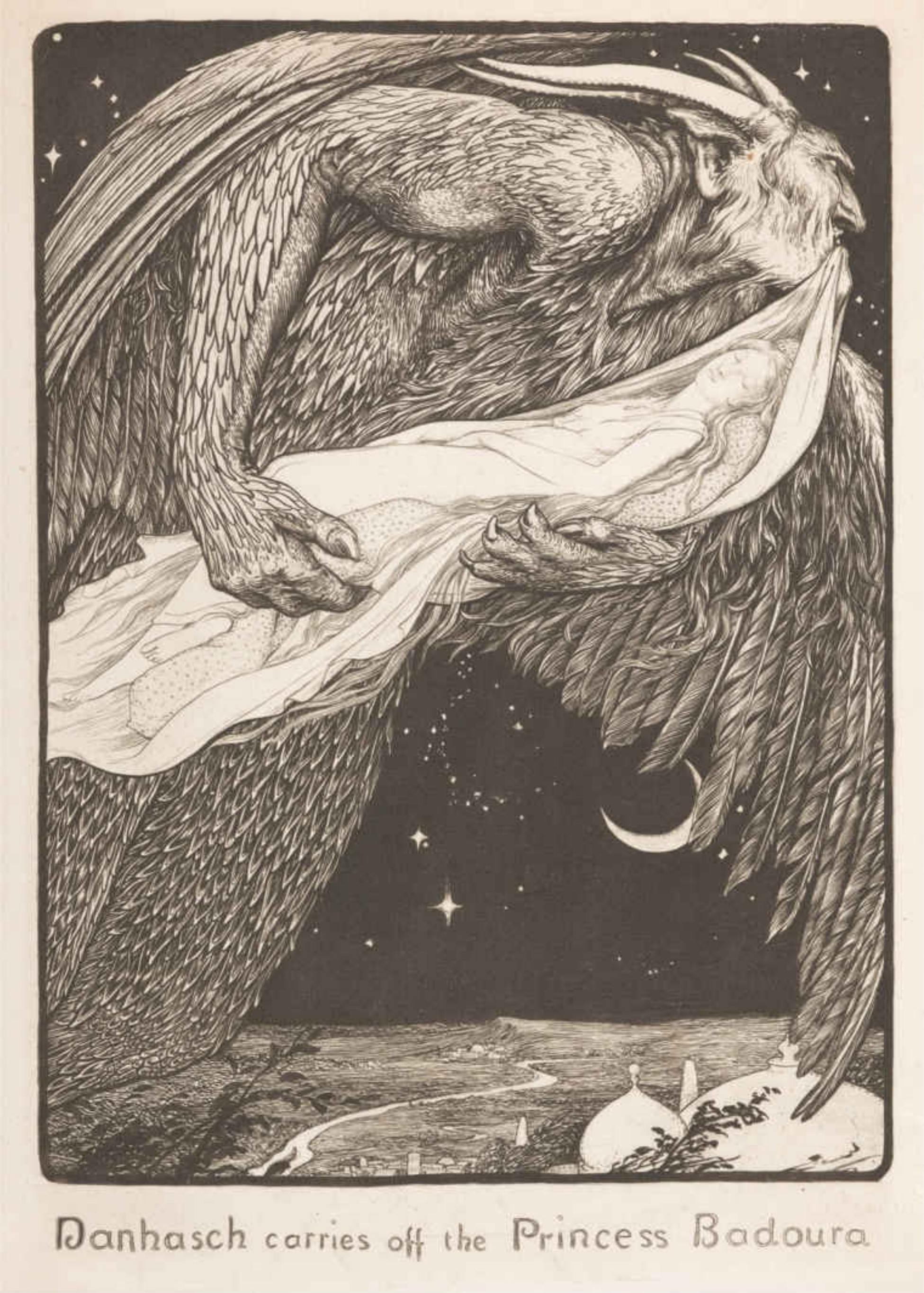
Her words were sweet to me and touched my heart.

“My good fortune brought me here,” I said, “to chase away my cares.”

And I told her my adventure, first to last. She wept for me and said, “This is my story. I am the daughter of Aftimarus, king of Ebony Island, who married me to my cousin. But on my wedding night[47] a jinni abducted me, took me flying through the air and landed here, and brought all I would need of food and drink and sweets. Once every ten days, he spends a night with me, then leaves (he has a family), but if I ever need him, night or day, I have only to touch these two lines on the step for him to be with me before I lift my fingers. Now four days have passed since he was here, and six remain till he returns. Will you spend five days with me, and leave one day before he comes?”

“If dreams are true,”[48] I said, “I will.”

Pleased, she led me by the hand through an arch to a bath, where she took off my clothes and hers and washed me, then she dressed me in a gown and sat me on a sofa, fed me sherbet, set a feast before me and I ate my fill.


Danhasch carries off the Princess Badoura

The abduction of a beautiful princess by a jinni also occurs in "The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur," but in that story the princess is safely returned to her home after meeting her beloved *prince. Illustration by John D. Batten from* Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

"You are tired," she said at last. "Lie down and rest."

I slept, my lady, forgetting all my cares, and when I woke I found her rubbing me, and my own soul refreshed. "Wine?" she said.

"Let us drink," I said. From a cupboard she brought out a stoppered flask and set a splendid table and began to sing:

If I had known my love would come this way, I would have laid
A mantle of my blood, my own black eyes upon the street
And tiled the earth with cheeks, and made
An avenue of eyelids for his feet

Love for her took over my whole being and chased away my gloom. We kept up our talk and drinking until dark, then I spent with her the sweetest night of all my life, and when we woke, delight followed delight until midday. I drank so freely that I lost my wits, and staggered left and right, and said, "Come, my lovely one, let me carry you up, up, out of this prison!"

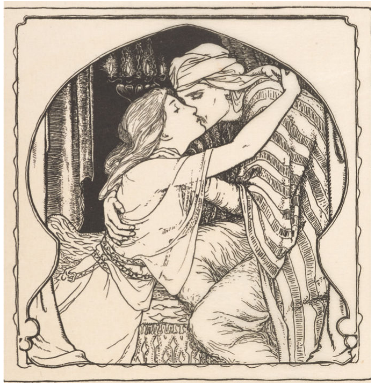
She laughed and said, "Calm down. In every ten days, only one is for the jinni and nine for you."

But drink had overpowered me.[49]

"I will break the step right now," I said, "and kill the jinni. I kill them by the tens."

She grew pale and said, "For God's sake, don't."

But my haze was stronger, and I gave the step a kick …



“Love for her took over my whole being.” Illustration by John D. Batten, from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

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Then everything was dark and trembling, there were blasts of light, and all at once my mind was clear.

“What now?” I said.

“The jinni is here!” she said. “Go up and save yourself.”

Up I went, but in my terror I forgot my sandals and my axe. I had not reached the top when I turned to see the palace floor divide and the jinni, a monster of ugliness,[50] appear and say, “What troubles you so that you trouble me?”

“No trouble,” she said. “My heart was heavy and I took a little wine to lighten it, and when I rose to relieve myself, the wine overcame me and I fell against the step.”

“You are lying,” said the jinni, who looked about and saw my sandals and my axe. He said, “Whose are these, if not a man’s?”

“I have never seen them until now,” she said. “They must have clung to you on your way here.”

“That is absurd,” said the jinni. “You shall not deceive me.”

Then he stripped her, tied her down, bound her hands and feet to stakes, and began to torture her, pressing her to confess. And I, unable to endure her cries and gripped by fear, crept up the stairs. At the top, I closed the door and covered it with earth,[51] regretting everything and thinking of the young woman, her kindness and beauty, the agony she suffered at the jinni’s hands, and the peace that was hers for twenty-five years, and how, in a night, I had ended it.

I thought of my father and his court, and how life had turned against me, forced me to cut wood, how for a while it had been good to me then struck me down again. I wept and blamed myself and said these lines:

My fate is like an enemy:
It shows me only hate.
If once it stoops to kindness
It soon mends its mistake.

Then I went back to my friend the tailor, who was waiting for me as if on hot coals.

“My heart has been with you all night,” he said. “I thought some beast had taken you. Thank God that you are safe.”

I thanked him for his concern and retired to my corner, where I sat mulling my adventure, blaming myself for being rash. As I sat there, sunk in thought, the tailor came to me and said, “Outside there is a Persian man who has your axe and sandals. Go and get them.”

At these words, I turned yellow with fear. The floor before me split and there appeared the Persian man,[52] that very jinni. He had tortured the woman viciously, but she had not confessed, so he had taken the axe and the sandals and said, “As surely as I am Jarjaris, born of the devil’s seed, I shall bring you back the owner.” Then he went with a ruse to the woodcutters and found me.

In a flash, he snatched me up and took me soaring, then to earth, and waking from my swoon, I found myself in the same palace, where I saw the woman stripped naked, bound, and bleeding. My eyes filled with tears. The jinni covered her and said, “Woman without shame, is this not your lover?”

She looked at me and said, “I do not know this man. It would not be lawful to tell lies.”

“If you do not know him,” said the jinni, “take this sword and cut off his head.”

She took the sword and came to me, and when she was close, I made signs with my eyebrows that she understood. She made signs in return, as if to say, “Is this not all your doing?”

I made signs asking for mercy, and she replied with words written in tears on her cheeks. Throwing down the sword, she said, “How can I strike the neck of one I do not know[53] and who has done no harm?”

The jinni turned to me and said, “Do you not know her?”

“Who is she?” I asked. “I have never seen her until now.”

“Then cut her head off,” said the jinni, “and I will believe you do not know her and let you go.”

“I will,” I said.

And I took the sword and raised my hand to strike …

The jinni demands that the princess strike off her lover’s head. Hajar Graigaa and Tewfik Jallab perform in Tim Supple’s stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights *at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann.*

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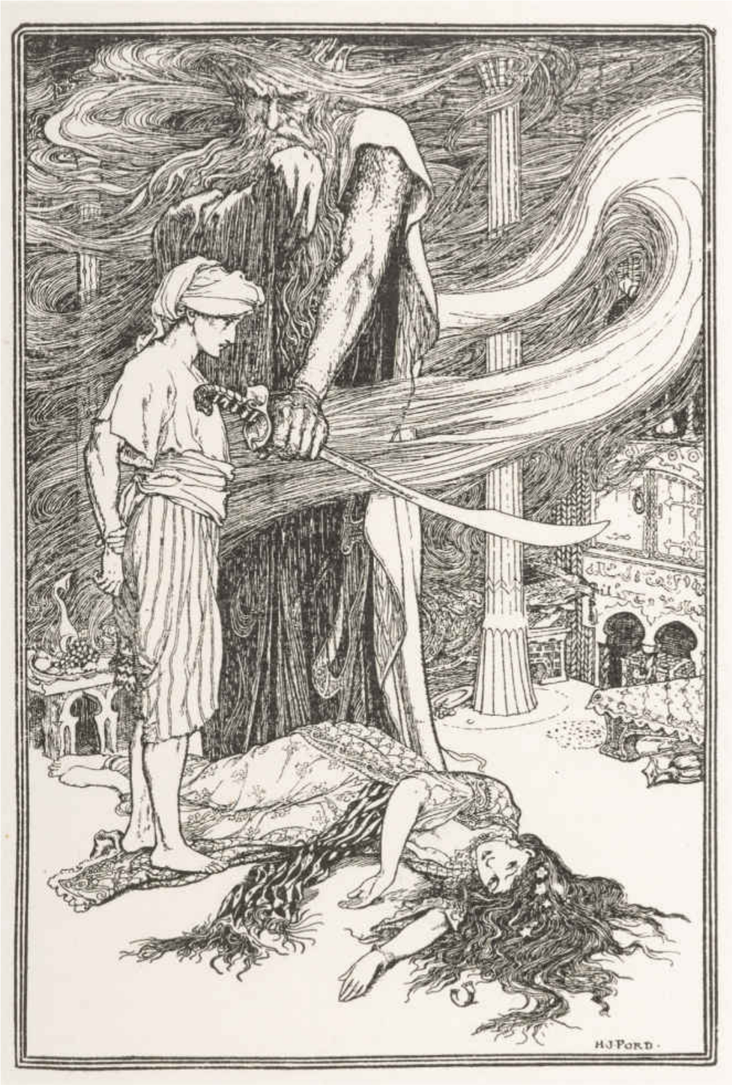
And Shahrazad agreed.

With her eyelids she said, “What? Is this how you repay me?”

And with her eyebrows she made signs I understood, and with my eyes I said, “I give my soul for yours.” Our eyes spoke for a while.[54]

It is the art of lovers to express
With eyelids what their lips have left unsaid.
A glance at him gives me the news I missed:
How sweet to linger on his face, what heat
In eyes that want to speak! Beloved lids
Spell out a note for loving eyes to read.



The jinni commands the prince to slay the princess. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

“Jinni,” I said, throwing aside the sword, “if a woman with little sense, messy mind, and muddled speech will not kill someone she does not know, then how can I, a man, kill someone I have never seen? I will not do it, even if I have to drink the cup of death.”

The jinni said, “You have talked behind my back! Here is the consequence.”

He took the sword and brought it down on the woman’s wrist and sent her hand into the air, then sliced the other off. In her agony, she saw her fingers fly and looked at me with dying eyes, and I passed out and wished for death.

“This is the punishment of those who cheat,”[55] the jinni declared.

Then he turned to me and said, “We have it in our law that if a woman cheats, she may be killed. This one I kidnapped on her wedding night when she was twelve and knew no man but me. I would come to her every ten days in the guise of a Persian man, and when I was sure she had cheated me, I killed her. As for you, though I am not certain you have wronged me, I cannot let you go as you are. Choose what I shall change you to. Dog or donkey? Lion? Beast or bird?”

I, hoping for mercy, said, “It would be better if you spared me, as the envied spared the envier.”

“What is their story?” asked the jinni.

And I said …

THE ENVIED AND THE ENVIER[56]

Jinni, the story goes that in a certain city two men lived side by side, their houses separated by a common wall. One envied the other, gave him the evil eye, and wished him harm, and his envy grew until he could not sleep or eat. As for the envied man, he only thrived, and the more the other cast him jealous looks, the more he prospered. When at last his neighbor’s envy came to his attention, he left his home and moved away, settled in another city, bought a piece of land with an old well and built a zawiya, a prayer lodge, furnished it with mats and simple things, and gave himself to the worship of God. The poor began to flock to him. His fame spread through the city.

Soon his reputation reached his envious neighbor, who learned how well he lived and how the city’s finest minds now came to visit him. He traveled to see him, and when he found the zawiya, the neighbor he had envied greeted him with warmth and joy and great respect.

“I have something to tell you,” said the envier, “the reason for my visit. Stand and walk with me around your zawiya.”

The envied man got up, and the envier took his hand and led him to the far end of the zawiya.

"Brother," he said, "tell your mendicants to go back to their cells. I can only speak to you unheard, in private."

And to the mendicants the envied man said, "To your cells."

They retired, then the envier said, "As I was telling you, my story …," and slowly he walked with him to the old well and pushed the envied in. No one saw this, and the envier went on his way, believing he had killed him …

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Now the old well happened to be haunted by jinn,[57] who caught the envied man and let him down and sat him on a rock. They asked each other, "Do you know this man?"

"We don't," the answer came, but one of them spoke up: "This man was envied, fled his envier and settled in our city, built this zawiya, and has kept us company with readings and recitals. But the envier came to him, deceived him, and threw him down to us. Now it happens that tonight, the man's fame reached the sultan, who wants to visit him tomorrow on account of his daughter."

"What is the matter with her?"

"She is possessed (the jinni Maimun ibn Damdam fell in love with her), but whoever learns the cure could heal her easily."

"What is the cure?"

"This man has in the zawiya a black cat with a white spot like a coin on the tip of its tail. He has only to pluck seven white hairs[58] and burn them in her presence for the jinni to leave her head forever, and she will be cured."

As this happened, jinni, the envied listened.

When morning broke, the mendicants came out and found the envied man emerging from the well, and they thought him even greater. He found the black cat, and from the white spot on its tail took seven hairs and kept them with him.

The sun had not yet risen when the king arrived with troops, dismounted with his lords, and had them stand aside. In the zawiya, the envied greeted him and sat him close and said, “Shall I reveal to you the reason for your visit?”

“Please.”

“You have come,” the envied said, “to ask about your daughter.”

“Sheikh,” the king said, “you are right.”

“Send for her,” the envied said, “and if it be God’s will, she will recover soon.”

The king, delighted, sent for her, and she was brought in chains.

The envied sat her down behind a screen, then took out the hairs and burned them. The spirit in her head cried out and left her, then she was herself again and hid her face and said, “What happened? Who brought me here?”

The king was overjoyed and kissed her eyes, and kissed the envied’s hand. Turning to his lords, he said, “What do you say? What does this man deserve?”

“He deserves to marry her,” they said.

“Yes,” said the king, and he married her to the envied man.

When the vizier died, the king said, “Who shall be vizier?”

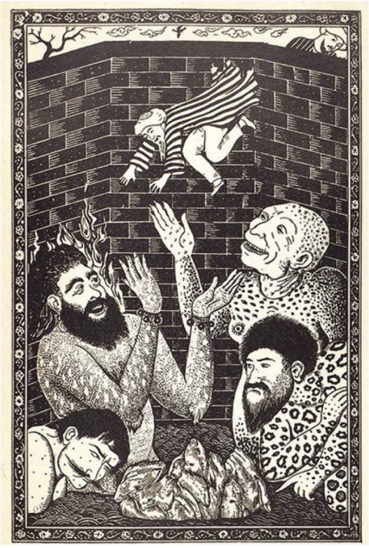
“Your son-in-law,” said the lords.

And the envied man was made vizier.

When the king in his turn died, they said, “Who shall be king?”

“The vizier,” they said.

And the envied man was king. One day, as he rode out with his men …



The jinn caught the envied man and put him down safely. Illustration from Nikolai Alexeyevich Ushin, from the Russian translation of the One Thousand and One Nights *by Mikhail Salye.*

* * *

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On his way, the king saw the envier, and turned to one of his viziers and said, "Bring me that man, but do not frighten him."

And the vizier brought him the envious neighbor.

"Give him a thousand coins from my treasury," said the king, "and twenty loads of goods to trade, and send him with an escort to his home."

Then the envied said good-bye and left without reproaching the envier for what he did.

* * *

"CONSIDER, jinni, the mercy of the envied on the envier: how he did not respond in kind or punish him, but pardoned him."

Then I wept, my lady, more than I thought possible to weep, and said these lines:

Pardon this crime[59]*—judges may be cruel*
Or kind. I own my sins, each one. It's time
You showed some grace. All those who seek
Forgiveness from above should throw
A rose to souls below.

"Fine," said the jinni. "I will not kill you, but mercy? Not a chance. I will put you under a spell."

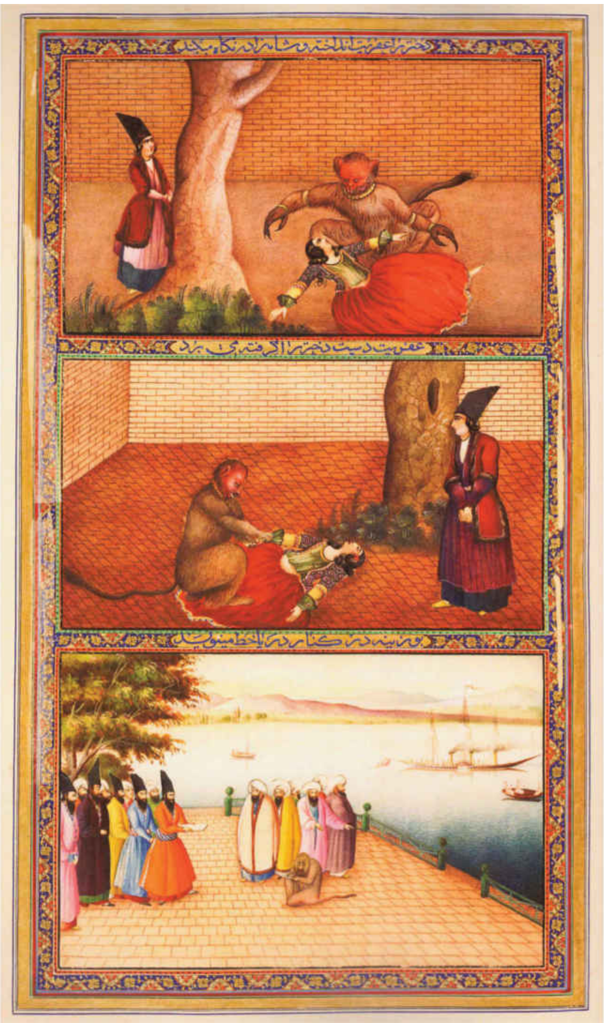
Then he snatched me from the earth and took me up into the sky until the whole world was beneath me like a cloud. He set me on a mountain, where he took a little dust and spoke to it under his breath,[60] then he scattered it on me and said, "Leave this shape for the shape of an ape!"

I was changed at once into an ape[61] and he flew off, and at the sight of my horrible state, I wept for my soul and bowed to fate, which has no master. Then I came down the mountain and found at its foot a desert plain, and I walked for a month until I met the edge of the salty sea. There I saw a ship upon the waves, with the wind at its back and the shore in its sights. I hid behind a rock and, when it was near, I leapt aboard.

"Throw out that beast of bad luck!" someone cried.

"Let us kill him," said the captain.

"I will kill him with this sword," another said.



Illustrations by Sani' ul-Molk and his studio from the 1843 manuscript of the Persian translation of the Nights *held at Tehran's Golestan Palace. Top: The jinni questions his captive. Middle: The jinni kills the princess. Bottom: The prince in ape form after being transformed. Image courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

I caught the captain's hem and, seeing tears pour down my face, he pitied me.

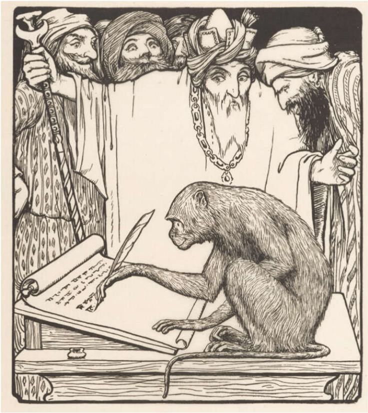
"This ape has come to me for help," he said, "and I will help him. Now he is in my care, let no one harm or cross him."

"Our king," they said, "sends you this roll of paper, where each of you must write a line. The king's calligrapher has died, and the king is seeking a successor who can match his skill."

They handed the merchants on the ship a roll of paper, ten cubits by one, and those who knew how to write wrote a line. When they had all finished, I stood up, still in the guise of an ape, and snatched the scroll from their hands. Fearing I would tear it or throw it overboard, they cried out and tried to kill me, but I signed to them that I could write.

“Let him,” said the captain. “If he scribbles I will chase him away, but if he writes well I will adopt him as my son, for I have never seen a more discerning ape.”

Then I took the pen, dipped it in ink, and in a simple hand I wrote these lines:



“In a simple hand I wrote….” Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

Fame is a record of all worth—
Yours it cannot measure.
God preserve your time on earth,
Virtue’s father and mother!

And I wrote many more lines in different hands….[62]

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Then I returned the paper to the messengers, who took it to their king. Of all the scripts, only one pleased him—mine.

"Go to the writer of these lines," he said, "and dress him in this robe, sit him on a mule, and bring him here."

But he was met with smiles, which put him in a rage.

"King of the age," they said, "the writer of these lines is an ape."

"Is it true?" he asked.

"It is," they said. "An ape who writes."

The king shook with delight and said, "I want to see this ape."

He sent his messengers to the ship with the mule and the robe. They came aboard and took me from the captain, dressed me in the robe and sat me on the mule and walked about me like a train of guards. The people were astonished, every eye on me, the whole city astir, and the word on all their lips was that the king had made an ape vizier.

When they set me in the presence of the king, I bent and stood three times and kissed the ground before the lords and knelt. Those who were there marveled at my manners, none more than the king, who said, "This is a wonder,"[63] and dismissed his court.

And when it was just the king, a servant, a little mamluk, and me, he called for food, and when a feast was served, he gave the sign to eat. I rose and kissed the ground, washed my hands seven times, and back on my knees I had only a little to eat, to be polite. Then I took a pen and ink and wrote these lines:

Why save up for a sheep to find delight
When trays of sweets all earthly dreams surpass?
My heart longs for a table spread with light:
Kunafa in a buttered honey bath[64]

"If this were a man," the king said, amazed, "he would be the finest of his age."

Then he set a chessboard before me and with a sign said, "Do you play?"

I kissed the ground and nodded yes, and we arranged the pieces. Our first game was a draw,[65] and the second game I won, and when we played again, I won the third, astonishing the king. Then I took the pen and ink and on the chessboard wrote these lines:

All day two armies fight
Till all the blood is shed
But covered by the night
They sleep in the same bed

The king, his mind in ecstasy, said to the servant, “Muqbil! Go to your lady, Sitt al Husn, and tell her that her father says to come and see something amazing.”

The eunuch was away awhile, then came back with the king’s daughter, who shot a glance at me and hid her face.

“Father,” she said, “have you so little care for me that you expose me to strange men?”

“No one is here,” said the king, “but the little mamluk, the eunuch who brought you up, and me. From whom do you cover your face?”[66]

“From this young man,” she said, “who is under a spell cast by a jinni (the son of the devil’s daughter), who changed him to an ape after killing his lover, the daughter of King Aftimarus. This ape is a man of the world, learned and wise.”

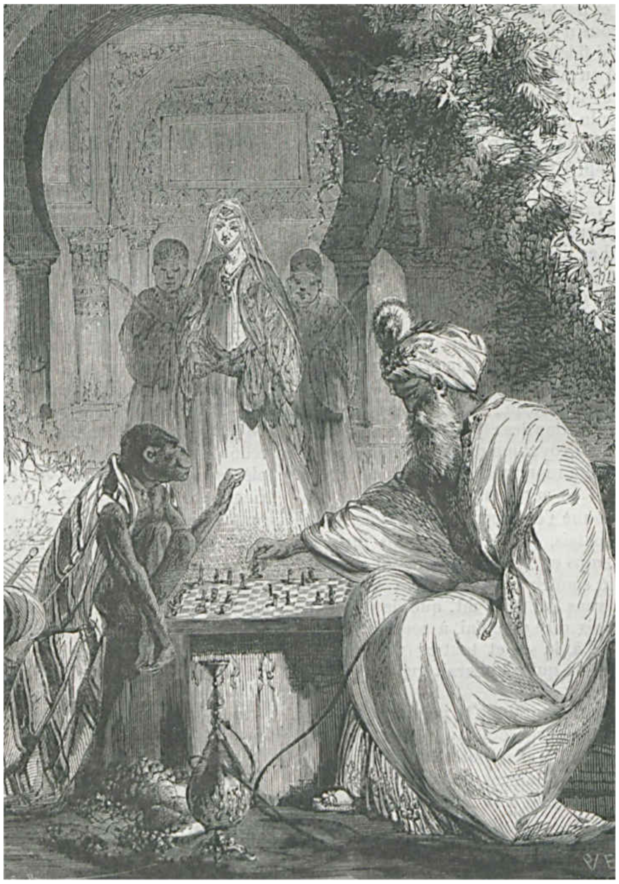
The king, bewildered, looked at me and said, “Is it true?”

I nodded yes. To his daughter, the king said, “How did you know?”

“As a girl,” she said, “I had with me a sly old woman who was a skilled witch. She taught me her craft, and I committed to memory seventy spells, by the least of which I could, within the hour, move the stones of your city beyond Mount Qaf, beyond the ocean that surrounds the world.”

“My girl,” said the king, “how is it that you have such powers, unknown to me? Release him from the spell and let me make him my vizier and marry you to him.”[67]

“Happily,” she said, and took a knife …



In his ape form, the prince plays chess with the king. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

* * *

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The king’s daughter took a knife[68] engraved with Hebrew letters, drew with it a circle in the middle of the hall, and in it she carved names in Kufic script and talismanic charms, and uttered solemn words. Soon the world was dark and seemed to close in on our heads, and we saw the jinni appear in the guise of a lion the size of a bull, and we were terrified.

The girl said, “Get away, you dog—”

“Traitor!” said the jinni. “You have broken the oath. Did we not pledge that neither of us would cross the other?”

“What is a pledge,” she said, “to a creep like you?”

“Then take what you deserve,” he said, and pounced on her with open mouth. But she was quick, and from her head she plucked a hair[69] and waved it, muttering, around the air, and the hair changed to a blade that struck the lion, slicing it in half. But as the halves went flying, the head changed to a scorpion and the girl became a snake, and they were locked in battle for an age. Then scorpion became vulture and the girl, changed to an eagle, hunted it, and they were gone awhile, until the ground was split and there emerged a cat, irregularly white and black, which snarled and snapped and growled. And the girl became a wolf, and they fought a bitter battle in the palace.

When the cat was overcome,[70] it gave a howl and turned into a worm and crept into a pomegranate lying by the pool. The pomegranate swelled to watermelon size, flew into the air, and threw itself onto the marble floor, breaking to pieces. All the seeds were scattered and the wolf, changed to a rooster, descended on the seeds and pecked them all, except for one that lay concealed at the pool’s edge.

The rooster crowed and flapped its wings and motioned with its beak as if to ask if any seeds remained (we failed to understand), and it cried so loud the palace seemed to shake. Then the rooster turned and chanced to see the seed at the pool’s edge, and dove …

* * *

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The seed rolled into the water and, changed to a fish, swam to the bottom. The rooster, now a larger fish, plunged after it, and for a long time they vanished.

Then we heard shrieks that made us shake. The jinni appeared as a flame of fire, casting fire from his mouth, and from his eyes and nostrils fire and sparks, followed by the girl, changed to a blaze. They clashed until their fires enfolded them and thick smoke filled the hall, and we were choking, fearing death by fire and certain the end was near. As the flames grew fiercer, we said, “There is no power and no strength except in God!”[71]

All at once, the jinni rose as a flame out of the blaze, leapt at us and blew fire at our faces, and the girl caught up and breathed hot blasts at him. But sparks from the jinni’s breath rained down on us, and one spark hit my right eye (I was still ape-shaped) and ruined it.

Another spark hit the king’s face and scorched the lower half, burning off his beard and knocking out a row of teeth, and a third spark hit the servant’s chest and killed him on the spot. We despaired of life and knew that we were lost when a voice cried, “God is great! He has overcome and brought disgrace to those who doubt.”

This was the king’s daughter, who had undone the jinni and burned him to a heap of ashes. Now she came up to us and said, “Bring me a cup of water.” Sprinkling me with drops, she said, “Return to your first form!”

I, shuddering, became the man I was.

Then she cried out, “Fire! Fire! Father, I shall not live long. I am not used to fighting jinn, though I was fine until the pomegranate split and I became a rooster, and I missed the very seed where the jinni’s soul was concealed. Had I picked it up, he would have died at once; instead, I fought him fiercely underground and in the sky and in the water. Every spell he tried on me I countered with a spell, until it was the spell of fire (rare are those who meet the spell of fire and are saved), but the greater skill was mine. Fortune helped me and I burned him first….”

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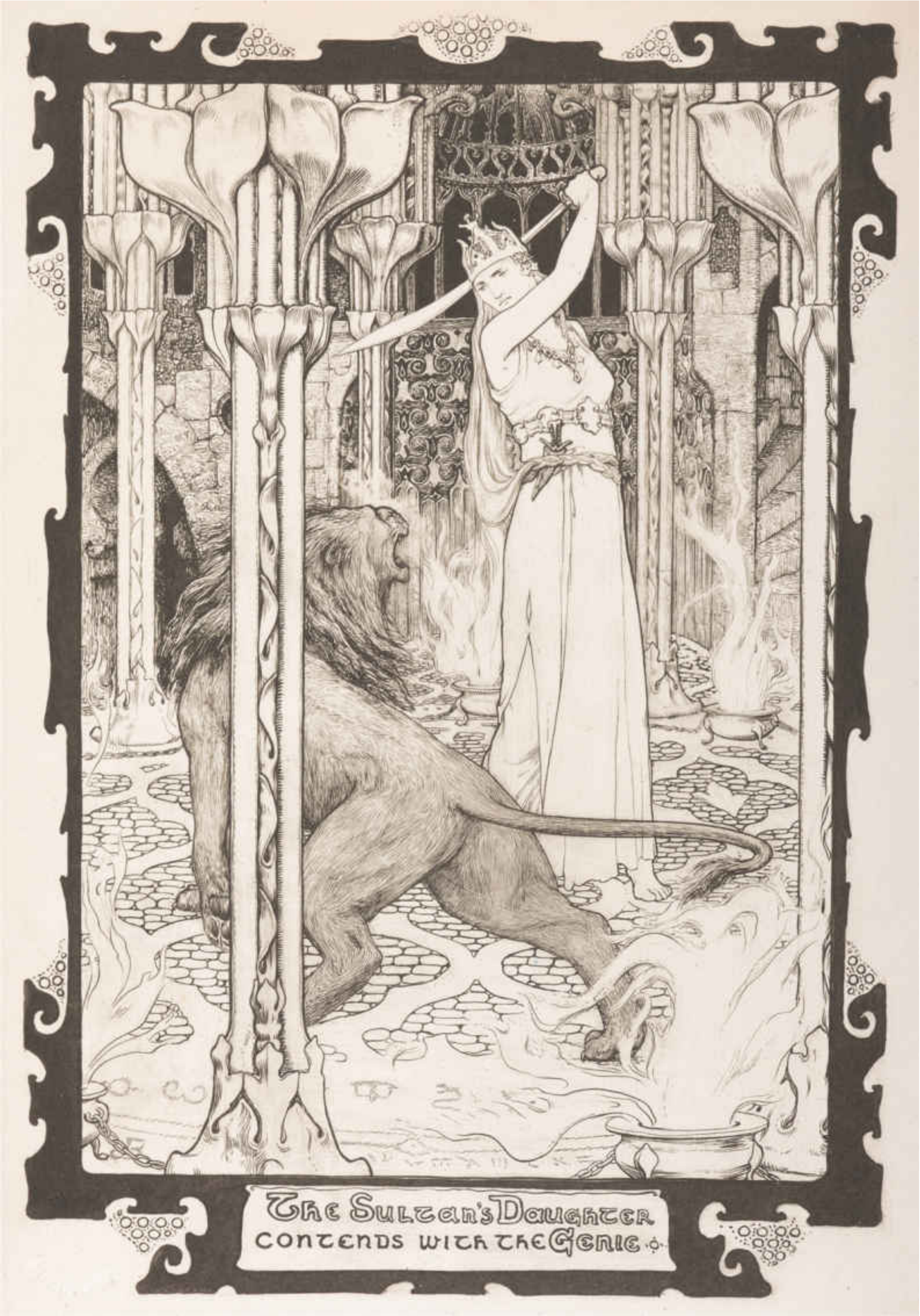
Then the king, her father, said, “My girl, it is a wonder that I am alive. Your servant died at once and this young man has lost an eye.”


The Sultan's Daughter contends with the Genie

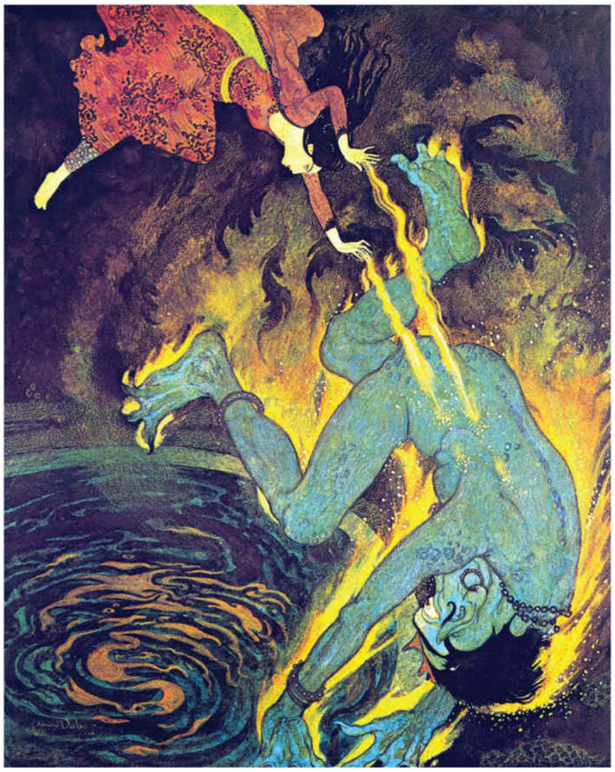
The princess battles the jinni. Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights*, ed. E. Dixon (1893).*

They wept, and soon she said again, “Fire! Fire!” because a spark had hit her legs, shot up her thighs, and she was crying, “Fire!” then it spread over her chest as she said, “Fire! Fire!” until she was all burned. Then she was nothing but a heap of ashes.[72]

And, my lady, I was full of grief and wished I were a dog or ape or dead instead of seeing that girl suffer, burn, and turn to ash.

When the king saw that his girl was dead, he beat his face and I did too, and I wept. Then the servants and the courtiers arrived and were amazed to find the king in shock and on the ground two heaps of ash. They took care of him till he revived and told them what the jinni did to his daughter, and their grief ran deeper. After they had mourned for seven days, the king had a vaulted tomb built over the girl’s ashes. The jinni’s ashes he had scattered to the wind.

For a month, the king lay ill. When his strength returned, and God set him among the healthy and his beard grew back, he summoned me to him.



“They clashed until their fires enfolded them.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Sinbad the Sailor & Other Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1915).*

“Young man,” he said, “listen and do not resist on pain of death.”

“My lord,” I said, “I won’t.”

“We had the sweetest life,” he said, “safe from the turns of time, until you brought disaster with your ugly face. My daughter died because of you, my servant too, and I barely escaped. You caused all this (since our first sight of you, we have seen nothing good) and we have paid for your deliverance with death. Now leave our city. Go in peace, but if I see you, I will kill you.”

He was shouting now. I left his presence seeing nothing, hearing nothing, quit the city weeping, lost, not knowing where to turn, considering my whole adventure, first to last, how I had arrived and in what state I was departing, heavy-hearted.

My final stop was at the baths, where I shaved off my beard and eyebrows,[73] put on this black robe, and left at last. Every day, my lady, I remember all the trouble that was mine, from the two girls’ deaths to the loss of my eye, and I weep heavy tears.

I crossed many lands and passed through many climes, bound for Baghdad,[74] in the hope of being introduced to the Commander of Believers and telling him my tale. I arrived tonight and found this man standing about, and greeted him, and asked him, “Stranger?”

“Stranger,” he replied.

Soon this other man appeared and greeted us with, “Stranger.”

“Strangers too,” we said, and we walked on together, night surrounding us, until fate led us to your home. That is the reason for my missing eye and beard.”

* * *

“Now pass your hand over your head and go,” the owner said.

“I will stay,” he said, “until I hear the other stories.”

And, his hands unbound, he went to stand beside the first man….

The story goes, *my happy king*, that the third dervish came forward and said …

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THE TALE OF THE THIRD DERVISH

MY STORY, fine lady, is not like theirs. It is stranger, for their misfortune was the work of fate, whereas I brought my trials upon myself, and I shed my beard and lost an eye by my own doing. It happened like this.

My father was a mighty king, and when he died, I took the throne. My city stood above a vast sea full of islands. I, Ajib ibn Khasib,[75] had fifty boats for trade, fifty for pleasure, and one hundred fifty for war and holy struggle. Hungry for the islands,[76] I embarked with a month's supplies, and at the end of my exploring I returned.

Then I made a second trip with two months' stores, thirsty for the sea. With ten ships, I sailed for forty days, but on night forty-one the wind rose all around us and the sea went wild, waves ran riot. We gave up on life as heavy dark surrounded us, and I said, "No praise for the reckless!"

We prayed to God, imploring, and the wind and waves kept up their raging motion until dawn. When day broke, the sea was still, air calm, the waves at rest, and when the sun appeared, the ocean lay before us like a sheet.

We reached an island where we landed, cooked and ate, and rested for two days, then set out again for ten. But every day the sea grew wider, land farther away, and the captain at a loss said to the watch, "Go up the mast and see."

The watch went up and looked, came down and said, "My captain, on my right I saw sky over water, nothing more, and on my left I saw a dark thing looming."

At these words, the captain threw his turban to the ground, tore at his beard, and beat his face.

"This is the news," he said. "We will all die."

And he began to weep and we with him.

"Captain, explain," I said.

“My lord,” he said, “we lost our course the night the wind turned wild, and we cannot go back. By midday tomorrow, we will come to a black mountain of a mineral called lodestone.[77] As soon as we are under it, the ships will come apart, and every nail in them will hurry to the mountain and stay fast, for God provided lodestone with a secret: All iron loves it, and after all the years and ships that have gone by, the mountain teems with iron.

“On the mountaintop above the sea is a dome of Andalusian brass supported by ten pillars, and on the dome is a rider on a horse of brass,[78] and on the rider’s chest hangs a lead tablet engraved with charms. It is this rider who drives all the boats to their doom, and they will not be safe until he falls.”

Then, my lady, the captain wept heavy tears and, certain death was near, we said good-bye and made our wishes known in the event that one of us was saved. We passed a sleepless night, and in the morning we were near the mountain, forced there by the current. When the boats were in the mountain’s lee, they came undone, and the nails and every iron part flew out[79] to the mountain and clung to its side. Some of us were saved and some were drowned, but we who were saved knew nothing of the others.

As for me, my lady, God saved my life that I may suffer other trials in other hells. I climbed onto a plank and, lashed by wind, was flung against the mountain, where I found a rising path, a staircase in the rock….

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I said the name of God and, cleaving to the mountainside, began to climb. God held the wind still and helped me reach the top, where I made straight for the dome in a bliss of relief. I slipped inside to wash and pray, throwing myself down in thanks for my escape, then I fell asleep under the dome.

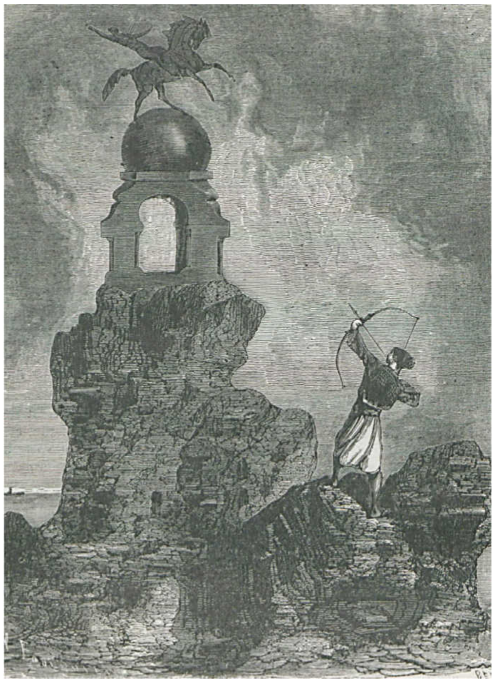
And in a dream, I saw a speaker say,[80] “Ajib, when you wake from this sleep, dig under your feet and you will find a bow of brass and three lead arrows carved with talismans. Take the bow and arrows, shoot the rider off his horse, and free the people from his curse. He will fall into the sea and the horse will fall at your feet. Bury it with the bow. The sea will swell up to the dome, and there will come to you a skiff bearing a man of brass (but not the man you shot) holding a pair of paddles. Ride with him, but do not say the name of God, and he will row you for ten days until you reach the Sea of Safety. There you will find someone to bring you home. All this will be done as long as God’s name never leaves your lips.”

I sprang from sleep and did as the voice said, and I shot the rider off his horse into the sea, and when the horse fell to my feet, I buried it. Then the sea swelled and rose to meet me on the mountain, and soon I saw a skiff slicing the water, and I gave thanks to God. And when the boat came near, I saw in it a man of brass,[81] on his chest a tablet carved with names and charms. I climbed in without a word.

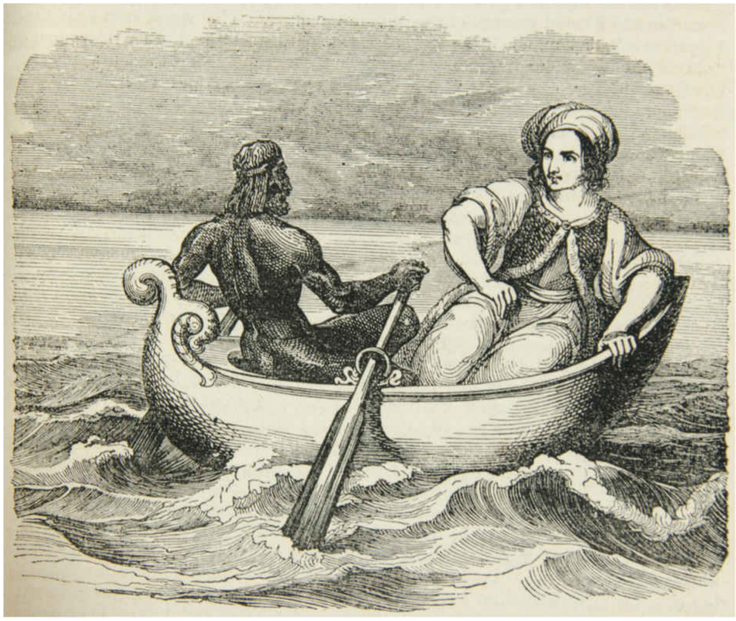
The boatman rowed me through the first day and the second, and on the ninth I spotted mountains, islands, signs of safety. In the peak of joy, I said God’s name,[82] and said there was no god but He and none was greater than He. Then all at once the skiff turned over and sank, and I was thrown into the sea and swam all day until my arms and shoulders ached. When night came and found me lost, I gave up hope.

Then a strong wind rose, lifted the sea, and on a wave high as a mountain I was taken up and cast ashore, for God wanted to save me. On dry land, I wrung out my clothes and spread them out to dry, and slept all night.

When morning came, I dressed and went out to explore, came to a patch of trees, and, circling it, I found I was on a small island surrounded by the sea.



"Take the bow and arrows, shoot the rider off his horse." Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*



The brass boatman rows the prince to safety. Illustration from Edward Forster's 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

"There is no power and no strength except in God," I said. As I stood in thought, wishing I was dead, I saw far off a ship with people in it, bound for the island where I stood. I hid in a tree and saw it land, and there came ashore ten slaves with shovels. I saw them walk to the center of the island, dig up the earth, and hit a trapdoor, which they lifted.

Then they returned to the ship and brought out of it bread and flour, butter and honey, sheep and tools (all the needs of settled life) and kept going to and fro, in and out of the trapdoor until they carried into the earth the contents of the ship.

When they went aboard for the last time, they came out with a very old man, or what little remained of a man time had crushed, a bone wrapped in a blue rag through which the winds whistled east and west. His hand held the hand of a boy cast in beauty's shape, a face to coin a phrase and a frame trim as a bough, with grace to tame hearts and charm to still the eye. They walked, my lady, to the trap-door, and vanished beneath it for a long time.

Then the old man and the slaves came out, but not the boy. They closed the trapdoor, returned to the ship, and set sail. When they were gone, I got down from the tree, and at the spot they had covered, I began to dig, and stayed with it until I cleared the earth to show a millstone.

Lifting it, I saw a winding staircase and went down, and at the bottom I found a home, pretty and clean and spread with silk. There was the boy on a high couch, propped on a round cushion, a fan in his palm and before him flowers and scented herbs, and no one else around.

When he saw me, he turned pale, but I said, “Set your mind at ease and calm your fear. I am a man like you, the son of a king, and fate has drawn me here to keep you company. What is your story, and how have you come to live alone below the ground?”

* * *

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

When I asked the boy to tell his story, and he was reassured I was like him, he became gladder, brighter, and he called me closer and said, “Brother, my story will amaze you and my tale is strange. My father is a jeweler, with slaves and traders who travel the seas and trade on his account. Though he dealt with kings and became rich, he was not blessed with children, until one night he dreamed[83] he was to have a son who would die young, and he awoke upset. My mother happened to conceive that night (he marked the date with care), and when her time came, she gave birth to me and brought my father joy.

“The astrologers, however, noted my birth date[84] and said, ‘Your son will live fifteen years, then something shall stand in his way. If he makes it through, he will live long, for in the salty sea there stands a mountain called the lodestone, and on its peak a rider on a horse of brass, and on his chest is a lead tablet. Fifty days after the rider falls, your son will die, and his killer will be the one who throws the rider off his horse. His name is Ajib, son of King Khasib.’

“My father was tormented, but he raised me with great care until I was fifteen.

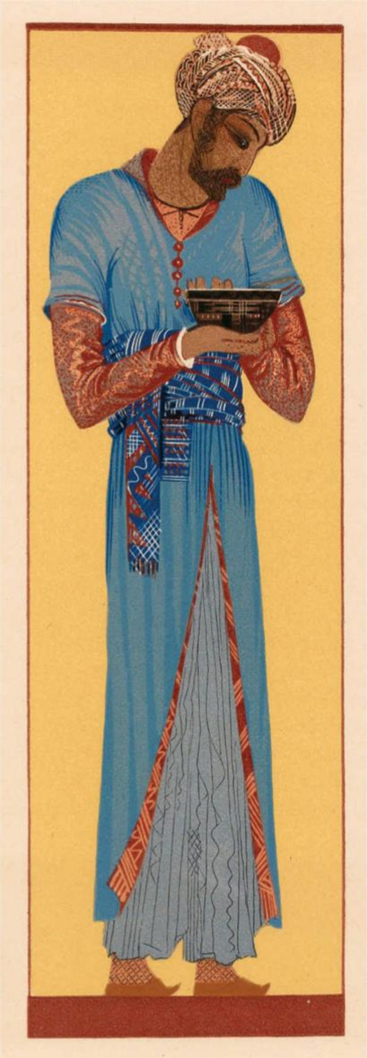
“Ten days ago, news reached us that the rider had been thrown into the sea by a man named Ajib, son of King Khasib. My father, fearing for my life, built me this house under the earth and brought me here with food for fifty days. Now ten days have passed and forty more remain until the danger passes and my father comes to take me home. This is my story. This is why I am alone.”

I marveled at his tale, my lady, and I thought, “I am the one who made the rider fall. I am Ajib, son of King Khasib, but I will never kill him.”

“My lord,” I said to the boy, “may you be far from harm and free of fear. I will stay and serve you for the rest of your days here. Then I will take you home, and you in turn will help me find my city.”

As my words were sweet to him, we went on talking until night. Then I rose and lit a candle, set out three oil lamps, and gave him sweets, and we savored them and spoke until most of the night was gone. When he fell asleep, I covered him and went to sleep myself.

When morning came, I warmed a little water, woke him gently, and he washed his face and said, “God bless you. When I am free from the man they call Ajib, son of Khasib, I will ask my father to reward you.”



The French illustrator François-Louis Schmied, known for his art deco style, developed a fruitful collaboration with Joseph Charles Mardrus, author of the most influential French version of Les mille et une nuits *in the early twentieth century. Illustration from* Histoire Charmante de l’Adolescente Sucre d’Amour *(Paris, 1927).*

“May all your days pass without harm,” I said, “and my time come before yours.”

I set food before him, and when we had eaten, I fashioned a checkerboard, and we played and took our pleasure until dark. Then I lighted the lamps, offered him sweets, and fed him stories until the night was nearly gone and he lay down at last, and, having covered him, I slept.

In this way, my lady, we passed the days and nights. Love grew in my heart,[85] and I forgot my cares and said to myself, “The astrologers lied! I am Ajib, son of Khasib, but I will never take his life.”

For thirty-nine days I stayed by his side and saw to his needs and told him tales. And on the fortieth night, the boy was glad and said, “Praise be to God, who has saved me from death by your blessing. I will have my father send you home, but first, brother, would you heat a little water for my bath?”

“With love and pleasure,” I said, and I warmed the water, took him to a little room, and washed his body well. Then I dressed him in fresh clothes and spread for him a high bed with a leather mat where he lay down to rest, all drowsy from his bath.

“Brother,” he said, “cut me up a watermelon and sweeten it with sugar.”

I went to find a good one, set it on a plate, and said, “Where is the knife?”

“Here,” he said, “on the shelf over my head.”

And in my haste, I reached for it and drew it from its sheath, and, stepping back, my foot slipped on the leather. I fell on the boy and, as God had willed, the knife went through his heart and killed him.

When I saw that he was dead and I had done it, I let out a scream and beat my face and tore my clothes and said, “Creatures of God! He had only one day left to wait, and still I killed him.[86] O forgive me, God, if only I had died before! These sufferings are mine to drink, drop by bitter drop.…”

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

When I was sure that I had killed him, as heaven had set down, I went up the stairs and closed the trapdoor, then covered it with earth.[87] Turning to the sea, I saw the ship slicing toward me. “Now they will come and find their boy dead,” I thought, “and know it was me, and they will kill me too.”

I climbed a high tree and hid among its leaves. Then the ship arrived and the slaves came ashore with the old man, the father of the boy I killed. They hurried to the spot, and when they moved the earth, they found it soft.

Down they went and discovered the boy on his back, his face still glowing from the bath, dressed in clean clothes and the knife deep in his heart. They howled and wept and cursed the murderer, and the father fainted for so long the slaves thought he was dead. They wrapped the boy in his clothes and carried him up, then one returned with a strip of silk and lifted the old man, stretched on it, to the light, and sat by his head. All this happened under the tree where I hid, my heart turning white before my hair.

The old man did not wake, my lady, until close to sunset. He came to, looked at his son, and saw that what he feared had come to pass, and he beat his face and head. With a deep sigh, his soul left his flesh, and the slaves cried out and threw dust on their faces, weeping without rest. They carried the man and his son to the ship and laid them side by side, then they set sail and vanished from my sight. I slipped down the tree and down the stairs and found the young man’s things and thought of him, and said these lines:

To see their traces is to ache
And cry where they once were
Whoever sent them far away
I beg for their return

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There I lived, my lady, for a month, my days on the island and nights underground, until one day I saw that on the island's west the sea was in retreat, leaving shallow water that the tide did not renew. By month's end, the land was dry and I was sure I would be safe, and I crossed the shallows till I reached the mainland.

There I saw nothing but sand until a far-off blaze caught my attention,[88] a fire burning bright. I moved toward it (no fire without someone to light it, I thought, a someone who might help), but as I drew near, I found the fire was a palace with gates of brass, flashing like flames when they caught the light. As I sat to rest in relief at the gate, ten young men in splendid clothes approached, an old man at their side, and each young man was missing his right eye, the strangest sight.

They greeted me and asked about my story. I told them what troubles had been mine, and they marveled at my tale and invited me into the palace, where I saw a circle of ten couches spread with blue. In the middle was a smaller couch, blue too, and as we entered, each young man sat on a couch. The old man took the smaller one and said to me, "My boy, sit on the floor and do not ask us how we lost our eyes."[89]

Then he rose and set before them food and drink, and did the same for me. When he served us wine, they put to me their questions, and I told them my adventures till the night was nearly spent.

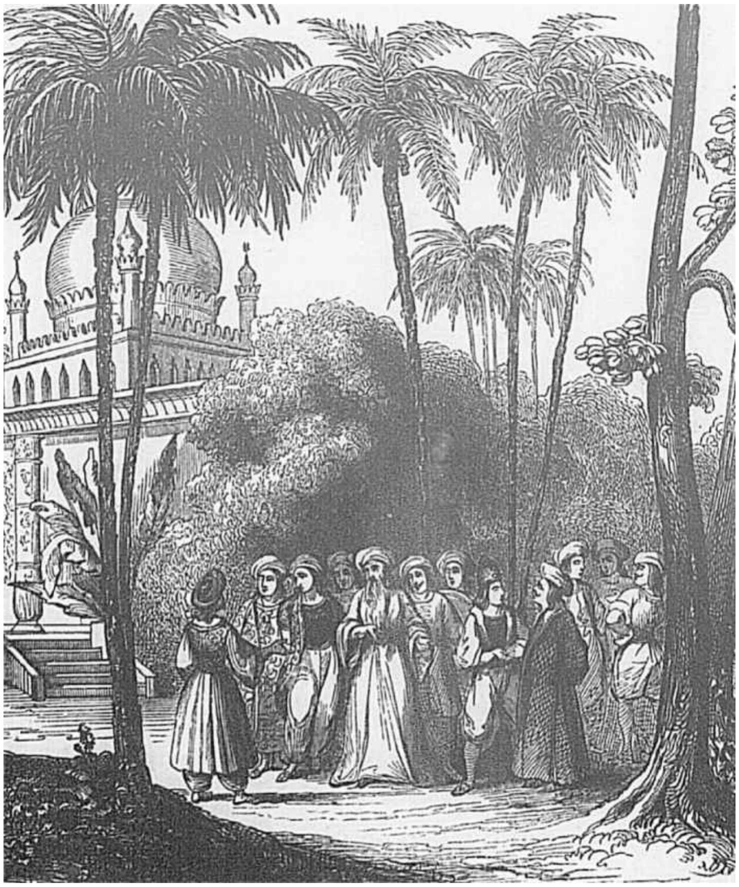
At length, the young men said to the old man, "Give us our due. The time has come."

"With love and pleasure," he said, and disappeared into a chamber and returned with ten trays on his head, each spread with blue. He set a tray before each man, lit ten candles, and placed one on each tray. Then he drew off the covers, and under them was nothing but ash and dust and soot.

Rolling up his sleeves, each man smeared his face and clothes with ash, and slapped his cheeks and chest, and wept and cried, "Not a care on earth had we! Curse our curiosity!" They carried on like this until near sunrise, when the old man rose and brought them hot water, and they washed their faces and put on fresh clothes.

When I saw this, my lady, sorrow left me and I burned to know. Breaking my silence, I said, “What is this, so soon after our play and laughter? You are sound of mind, thank God, and yet you act as only madmen do. I ask you, by what you hold most dear, to tell me your tale and how you lost your eyes and why you smear yourselves with dust.”

“Youth has made you pry!” they said. “Refrain from asking why!”



Ten young men approached me. Illustration from Les Mille et une Nuits: Contes Arabes, *translated by Antoine Galland (1840).*

They laid out the food and we ate, but in my heart was fire, a blazing need to know. We sat talking until night was near, then the old man brought the wine, and we sat drinking until half the night was gone. Then the young men said, “Give us our due. The time has come to sleep.”

The old man brought the trays of dust and soot,[90] and the young men did what they had done the night before. To make it short, my lady, I stayed with them for a full month, and every night they marked their faces with grime and washed it off in the morning. Alarmed and all at sea, I watched them, so confused that I could take no food nor drink. Until at last I said to them, “Young men, will you not tell me what this means? If you will not, let me go home and give my eyes relief from what they see. Out of sight, they say, and out of mind.”

“We have kept our secret,” they said, “only out of pity, to spare you what we suffered.”

“Tell me,” I said.

“Don’t ask,” they said, “lest you become like us.”

“But I must know.”

“When you find out,” they said, “remember that we will no longer shelter you or let you stay with us.”

They fetched a ram, then slaughtered and skinned it. Giving me a knife, they said, “Get in and we shall sew you up. A bird known as a rukh[91] will take you up into the air and set you on a mountain. Slash your way out of the ram’s skin (the bird will fly away) and walk for half a day until you come to a tall palace build of sandalwood and aloe, plated with red gold and set with precious stones. Enter. You will have your wish. It was in that palace that we lost our eyes and for that reason that we stain our faces. But the story is too long to tell, for each of us lost his eye by an adventure of his own. …”

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Then the young men helped me into the ram’s skin and sewed me up, and soon a white bird took me up and set me on the mountain. I cut open the sack (the bird flew off) and walked until I reached the palace, which was just as it had been described. Stepping through an open door,[92] I found myself in a hall vast as a racecourse, with forty chambers behind forty doors of sandalwood and aloe, plated with red gold and decked with silver handles. At the far end of the hall were forty girls, lovely as moons, who filled the eye without sating it. They welcomed me and said, “We have been expecting you for months! Praise be to God for sending us a man who deserves us as we do him.”

Sitting me on a high couch, they said, “Today you are our lord and master. We are your servants willing to obey.”

I watched in a daze as they brought me food and fed me, and washed my hands and feet and changed my clothes, and gave me sherbet. They gathered round, happy to see me, and sat and spoke to me until night fell …

* * *

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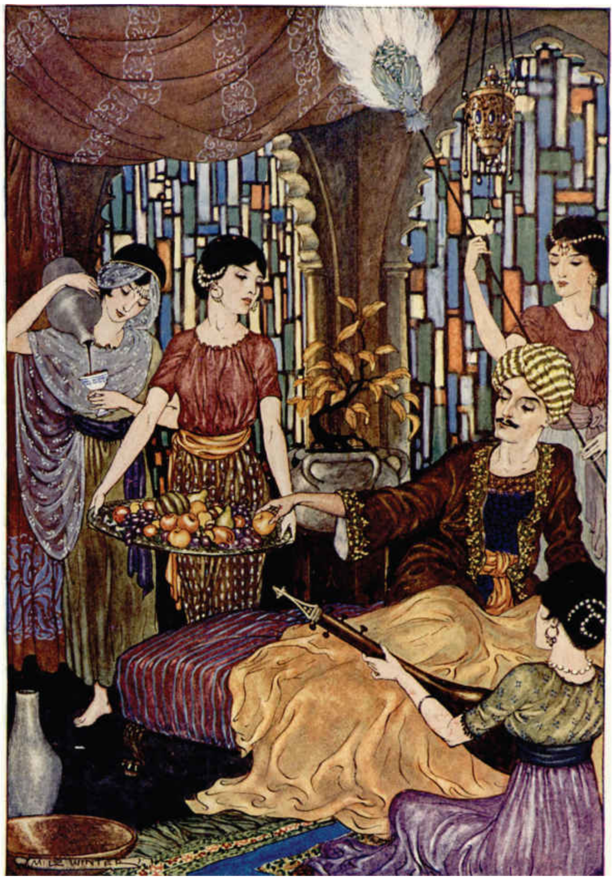
When night came, my lady, five of the girls rose and laid a table with herbs and nuts, fresh and dried fruit, and brought the wine. As we sat to drink, some sang, some played the oud, others the flute. The cups went round. Delight came over me until my troubles left me and I thought, “This is the life, if only it were not so brief.” I stayed with them until most of the night was gone and we were drunk.



The girls offered food and drink and my troubles left me. Illustration by Milo Winter from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1914).*

Then they said, “Choose one of us to spend the night with you. You will not sleep with her again for forty days.”

I chose one with a pretty face, kohl-edged eyes and coal-black hair, slightly parted teeth and joining brows, lovely as a bough or a stalk of sweet basil, balm for the eye and a flame to the mind. The night I spent with her was the sweetest in my life….

* * *

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When it was morning, the girls took me to the bath and washed me, dressed me in fine clothes, and served the food, then wine. We passed the cup among us until night, then they said, “Choose one of us to spend the night with you.”

I chose one soft in face and form and spent with her a tender night. And to be brief, my lady, for a year I lived with them a life of sheer delight, choosing one out of the forty every night, sharing food and drink and pleasure with them all. Then one day at the new year, they came to me with sobs and sighs and sad good-byes, and clung to me and wept.

“You break my heart,” I said. “What is it?”

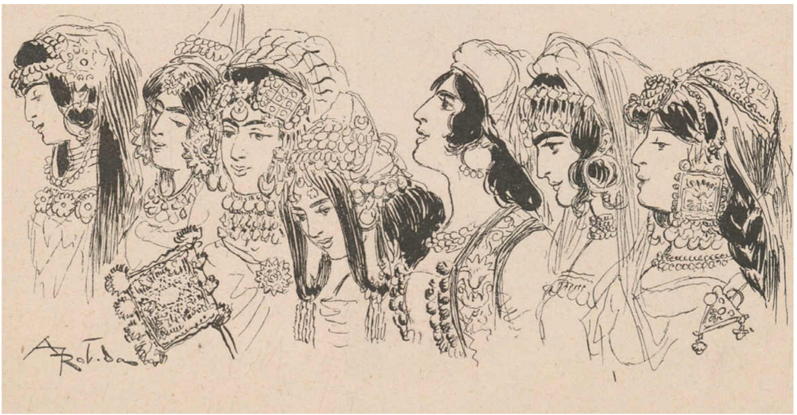
“We wish we had not met you! We have lived with many men, but none so nice as you.”

“Why do you weep?”

“To think of parting!” said the girls. “If you listen to us, we will not part, but if you disobey, we will. Our hearts tell us that you will not obey, and that is why we cry.”

“Tell me,” I said.

“We are the daughters of kings,” they said, “and have lived together here for many years. Once in every year, we go away for forty days, and the rest of the time is spent here, eating and drinking and taking our pleasure. Now this is how you will disobey us: We are about to go away for forty days and leave you with the palace keys. There are forty rooms. Thirty-nine rooms you may enter and explore (each one will occupy you one whole day) but you must never open the door of red gold.[93] Behind it is that which will separate us….”



“Choose one of us to spend the night with you.” Illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(Paris, 1909).*

* * *

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“Our parting,” said the girls, “is in your hands. Be patient forty days while we are gone, explore the thirty-nine rooms all you like, but from the fortieth keep away—or we will part.”

I swore never to enter it and saw them out (they wagged their fingers at me as they left), and I was left alone. I told myself again that I would never step inside that room and cause our parting.

Then I opened the first room and came into a place like Paradise,[94] an orchard of green trees and many fruits, alive with birds and rills. I walked through the trees and perfume and the birds singing together in praise of the Creator, and I saw apples whose colors were like the cheeks of lovers (red on the pillow, pale before parting), and pears sweeter than syrup, headier than musk and amber, quinces too, and plums that caught the eye like polished gems. At last, I left the garden and closed the door.

The following day, I opened another, and found myself in a large field of palm trees watered by streams, lush with roses and jasmine, sweetbriar and marjoram, irises and violets, and lily of the valley, and the breeze was playing, blowing scent over the field. When I had drunk deep of its delight, I left the chamber and closed the door.

Behind another, I found a vast hall paved with colored marble and rare stones, hung with cages of sandalwood and aloe, which housed a world of singing birds, nightingales and thrushes, blackbirds and pigeons, silver doves and Nubian doves. And in their music I forgot my cares and slept among their voices until dawn.

In the morning, I opened a fourth door and found a great hall lined with forty rooms whose doors stood open. I entered every chamber and found them full of pearls and emeralds, coral, ruby, gold and silver, and I thought such wealth could belong only to the king of kings. My heart filled, my sorrows fled, and I thought, “I am that king of kings! This wealth is mine, these women mine alone!”

For thirty-nine days, I went from room to room until there remained only one chamber, the one the girls had warned me not to open, and one night before they returned …

* * *

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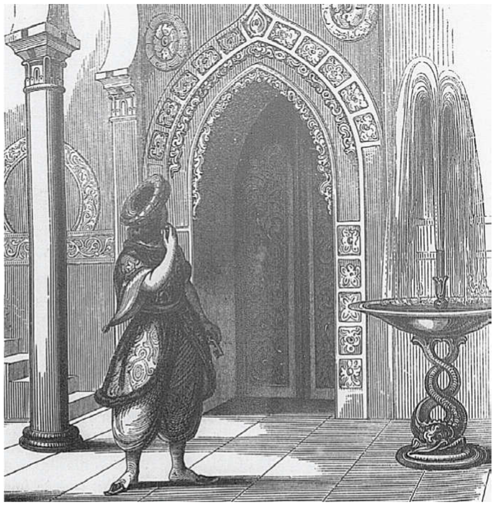
When only one chamber remained out of the forty, it preyed upon my thoughts, the devil at my back pressing me on, pushing me under. Though a year of pleasure would have been mine for a day of patience, I could not beat the devil.

I opened the door plated with red gold and met a smell so sharp it sent me to the floor and held me still. When my strength returned, I ventured in, and found myself on a carpet of saffron lighted by lamps of gold and silver fed with costly oils, and candles burning ambergris and oud, and censers burning oud and ambergris and frankincense and musk, whose smoke combined to fill the room with scent.

There I saw, my lady, a horse black as darkest night, bridled and saddled with red gold. Before it were two crystal feeders, one containing sesame, the other rosewater and musk. And I thought, "There must be something great about this horse."

Then the devil gripped me once again, and I led the horse away, out of the palace. But when I tried to mount him, he refused to stir, nor was he moved by kicks, so I took the whip and cracked it. When it met his flesh, he gave a shout like thunder, a pair of wings unfurled, and I was carried up into the sky.[95]



"There remained only one chamber." Illustration detail from Les Mille et une Nuits: Contes Arabes, *translated by Antoine Galland (1840).*

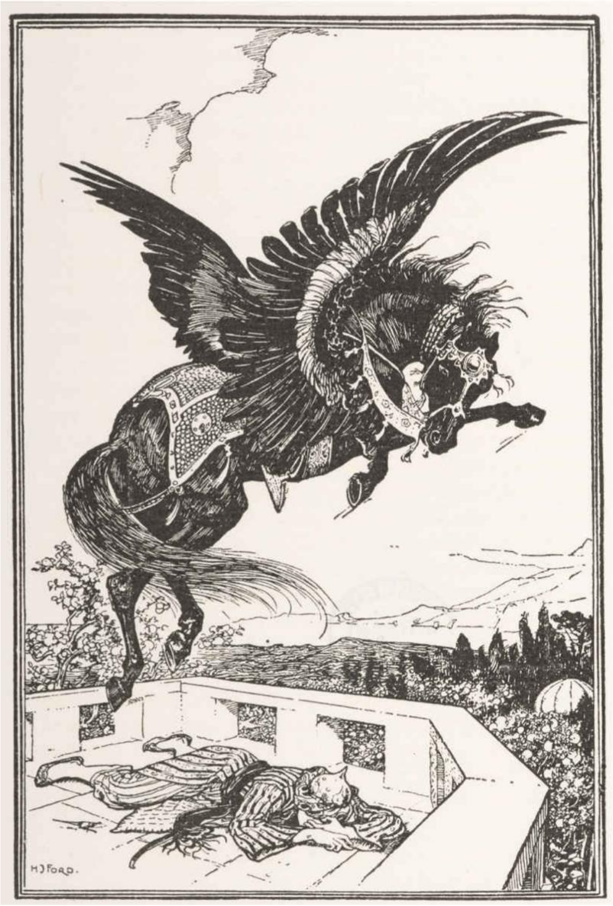
The horse set me on a roof and threw me off his back. With his tail, he lashed me on the face and tore out my right eye, which rolled down my cheek and away.

"There is no power and no strength except in God!" I cried. "I teased the one-eyed men and have become like them."

As I looked down from the roof, I saw ten couches spread with blue, and realized I stood above the palace of the one-eyed men who warned me and whose warning I refused to heed. I went down and was sitting among the couches when I saw the men approach.

“No peace upon you,” said the men. “No welcome!”

“All I wanted,” I said, “was to know the reason why you stain your faces.”



The black horse threw me off his back. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

“Each of us,” they said, “has suffered what you have. Each lived a life of sheer delight,[96] wolfing chickens, sipping from crystal, resting on silk, sleeping on velvet skin, and lost an eye to prying, and now can only mourn.”

“Do not blame me for my slip,” I said. “Now that I am like you, bring me a tray of dirt to stain my face.”

And I wept heavy tears.

“We will never shelter you nor let you stay with us,” they said. “Go to Baghdad and find someone to help you there.”

I recalled my miseries, how I had killed the boy and how curiosity had brought me down, and I walked out with a heavy heart and cut off my beard and eyebrows. I gave up all I had and roamed the earth, a one-eyed dervish.

Watched over by God’s grace, I reached Baghdad this very night, where I met these two men at a loss, and I greeted them and said, “I am a stranger.”

“We are strangers, too,” they said, and so it was, my lady, that I lost my beard and eye, and by this twist of fate that we three half-blind men have come to sit before you.

* * *

THE STORY GOES, *my happy king*, that once the owner heard the tales of all three dervishes, she said to them, “Pass your hands over your heads and go.”

“We will not go,” they said, “until we hear the tales of our companions.”

The woman then turned to Jaafar and the caliph and said, “Tell us your story.”

Jaafar stepped forward and repeated the story he had told the keeper at the door. “I grant you your lives,” said the owner.

The men left the house, and when they were outside, the caliph asked the dervishes, “Where are you going? It is not yet light.”

“To tell the truth,” they said, “we do not know.”

“Come and stay the night with us,” the caliph said.

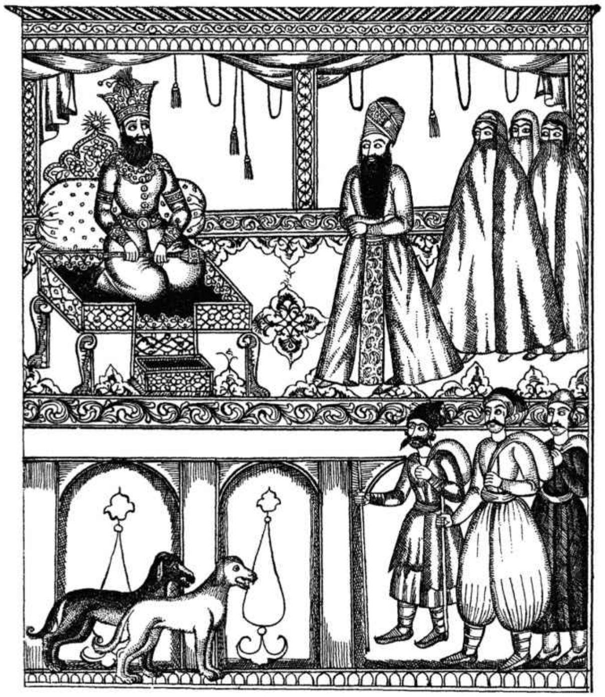
And to Jaafar he said, “Take these men to the palace[97] and bring them to me in the morning, so that we may record the stories we have heard tonight.”

Jaafar did as he was told, while the caliph returned to his quarters and passed a night of worry, remembering the dervishes and how they had been sons of kings and were brought low. He burned to know the stories of the woman with the black dogs and the woman who had been whipped, and he could not sleep.

When day broke, he sat on his throne, and when Jaafar arrived, he said, “Bring me the women (I want to hear the story of the dogs) and bring the dervishes.”

Jaafar quickly brought them (three dervishes, three women) and placed the dervishes beside him and the women behind a screen. To the women he said, “You have been generous and kind to us and now, if you are unaware, let me tell you where you are. You are in the presence of the seventh son of Abbas, al-Rashid son of al-Mahdi son of al-Hadi brother of Saffah son of Mansur, so tell him the truth and nothing but the truth![98] Tell the caliph why you beat the two black dogs, why you weep after you beat them, and why they weep with you….”

The owner of the house began to speak …



Caliph Harun al-Rashid summons the three women and the three dervishes to his court. From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of The Thousand and One Nights*, illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF THE FIRST WOMAN, THE OWNER

MY STORY is so strange that if you were you to carve it with a needle in the corner of an eye, it would be a warning to the wise.

The two black dogs are my sisters by the same mother and father, and these two women (the buyer and the keeper) are my sisters by another mother. When our father died and the inheritance was split, the three of us lived with our mother, while the other two sisters lived with theirs. When our mother also died, leaving us three thousand dinars, we took a thousand each. Since I was the youngest of the three, my two sisters prepared their dowries and married before me. The husband of the eldest traded his money and hers for goods to trade, and they set off.

For five years they were gone, and he wasted all her money and abandoned her, leaving her alone in foreign lands.

Then she returned to me, dressed like a beggar[99] in rags and a dirty old cloak. I was shocked to see her so unlike herself, and said, “What happened?”

“Words are of no use,” she said. “What was set down has come to pass.”

I took her to the bath, dressed her in fresh clothes, and gave her broth and wine to drink. I looked after her for a month, then I said to her, “Sister, you are the eldest, and you have taken the place of our mother. Let us share my wealth: God has blessed my share and made it prosper, and I have made much money spinning silk.”[100]

I was kind to her as far as I was able, and for a year she lived with me, our minds on our other sister. Not long afterward, she too came home, in a worse state than the first, and I looked after her just as I had the other, clothing her and treating her with love.

Soon after, they said to me, “Sister, we cannot go on without husbands. Let us marry.”

And I said, “No good can come of marriage.[101] What good has come of yours? Decent men are hard to find. Let us live together by ourselves.”

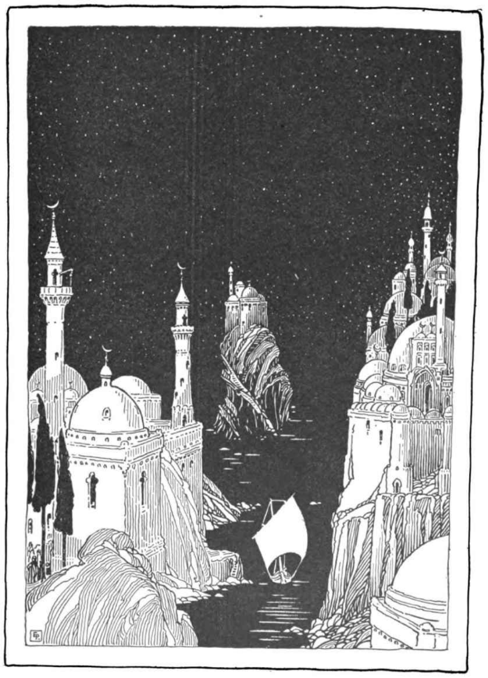
But they did not listen and married again without my consent, though I paid for their dowries from my own pocket. Their husbands betrayed them before long (taking what they could, leaving their wives behind) and my sisters came back to me, begging for pardon.

“Sister,” they said, “you are younger than us both in years, but far ahead in wisdom. Let us never talk of marriage again.”

I welcomed them back and embraced them, and said that nothing was dearer to me than their company, and took them in and spoiled them. We spent a year together, and with time my wealth increased. Until one day, Commander of the Faithful, I thought to go and trade in Basra. I found a large ship and loaded it with things to sustain us at sea and things to sell, and we set sail. But the captain strayed from his course, and we were lost for twenty days. On the twentieth day, the watch went up the mast and cried, “Good news!”

Then he came down the mast and said, “I saw a city perched there like a dove.” And we were happy, docked within the hour in the city, and I stepped out to see. When I neared the gate, I saw people holding staves, and, drawing closer, I saw that they had been cursed and turned to stone. As I went in farther, I found the people of the city all translated to black stone, not a breath left in them. In disbelief I walked the market streets, with everything left as it had been. At the city’s end, I found a gate of red gold spread with silk,[102] lighted by a hanging lamp, and I thought, “Strange, could there be people here?”

Entering, I found a hall that led into another, then another, and as I moved alone from hall to hall without seeing a soul, I grew uneasy. I walked until I found the harem, bright with gold brocade, where I found the queen asleep and dressed in pearls the size of hazelnuts, and on her head a crown of many gems. All that covered her, clothes and jewels, was in its natural state, but her body was made of black stone …



“I saw a city perched there like a dove.” Illustration by Eric Pape, from The Arabian Nights: Tales of Wonder and Magnificence *(1923). Like* Nights *translator Edward Lane, American painter and illustrator Eric Pape spent several years drawing ancient monuments in Egypt.*

* * *

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In the middle of the hall, I found a bed of ivory plated with gold, set with emeralds and hung with a net strung with pearls, and through the net I saw a glittering. Looking closer, I saw there, set on a pedestal, a gem large as an ostrich egg,[103] blazing like a flame and casting its rays wide.

The bed was spread with silk, and by the pillow were two lighted candles. Thinking someone must have lit them, I entered the next room and came to the kitchen, then the cellar, then the treasure house. I went from room to room, lost in amazement[104] at this place and wondering what had happened to the city’s people, until the night came on, and I searched for the palace gate but could not find it. As dark surrounded me, I wandered in the gloom, finding nowhere to take shelter but the chamber with the candles, where I lay down on the bed, covered myself, and tried to go to sleep.

At midnight, I heard a voice in sweet recital, so I rose, hungry for company. I followed the voice to a half-open door, and into what appeared to be a prayer room. A niche was lit with hanging lamps, two candles burned, and on a carpet sat a beautiful young man, reading from the Qur’an,[105] who seemed to me the only soul left in the city.

I stepped inside and greeted him, and said, “Thank God for leading me to you. My ship and I are lost, but you will help us find our way back home. By the truth of the book in your hands, answer my question.”

With a smile, he looked at me and said, “Tell me first, sister, why you are here, and I will tell you all that happened to the people of this city, how they were cursed and I was not.”

I told him our story, how our ship had strayed for twenty days, and when I asked again, he said, “Sister, be patient.”

He closed the holy book, put it away, and sat me by his side …

* * *

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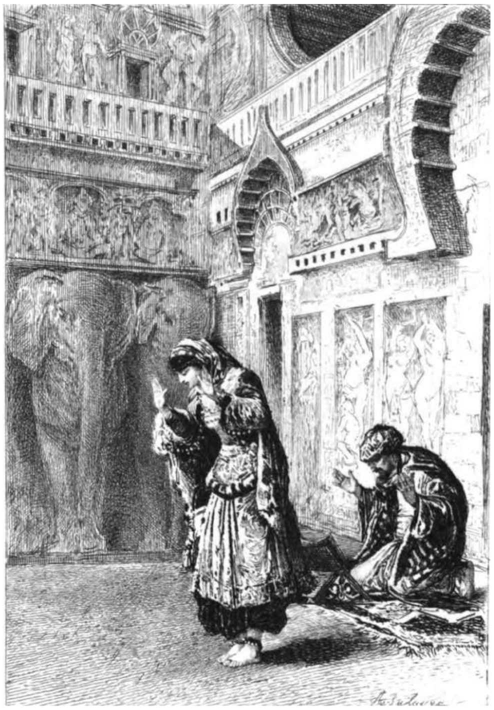
His face was like the moon when it is full, and a glance at him cost me a thousand sighs. I begged him again to tell me all.

“Sister,” he said, “this city is the capital of my father the king (you may have seen him turned to stone) and my mother is the queen you must have found inside the net. They and all the people here were Magians,[106] who worship fire instead of God, and pray to fire and swear by it. I, being the child of my father’s old age, grew up in plenty and thrived. There happened to live with us a very old woman who used to teach me the Qur’an and told me to worship none but God, and I hid this knowledge from my family.

“One day we heard a mighty voice cry, ‘People of the city! Leave your fire worship and worship the Merciful God!’ But they refused, and a year later the voice cried out again, and again the year after. Until one day the city was turned to stone,[107] and none was saved but me. I have sat here since that day, always in prayer, but my loneliness is heavy: I have no company.”



She told me to worship none but God. Detail from illustration by Albert Letchford, from A Series of Seventy Original Illustrations to Captain Sir R.F. Burton’s “Arabian Nights” *(1897). Letchford placed the strange and sometimes shocking events of the stories in recognizable settings that he constructed from library research and his own observations of the Levant.*

I said to him—for he had won my heart and was lord of my life and soul—“Come with me to Baghdad. This girl who stands before you is the head of her family, mistress over men and slaves. I have goods to trade, and some are on the very ship that once was lost and now is anchored at your city, by the will of God who drove me here to you.”

I pressed him,[108] Commander of the Faithful, until he agreed, and I spent the night in disbelief at his feet. When morning came, we rose and took from his father’s treasure whatever was of little weight and great worth, and went down from the castle to the city, where I found the captain and my sisters and my servants who were searching. They were glad to see me, and amazed to hear about the young man and the city, but when my two sisters (these dogs) saw the young man with me, they envied me and wished me harm.[109]

We went aboard, rejoicing at our gain, and the greatest joy was mine for the young man. We waited for the wind to push us out to sea ….

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After we set sail, my sisters asked me, “Sister, what will you do with this handsome young man?”

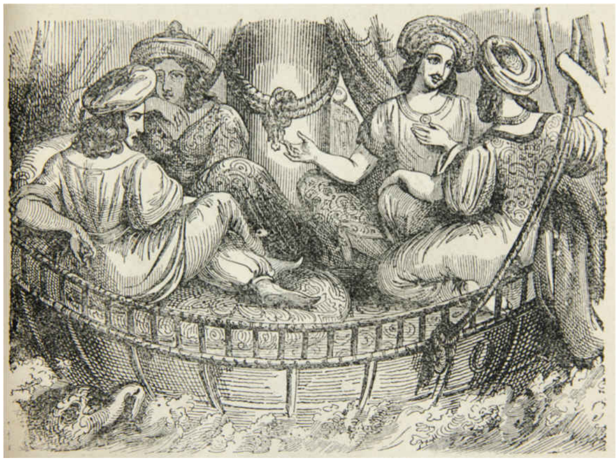
“I will make him my husband.”

Then I turned to him and said, “Lord of my life, grant me this wish. When we reach Baghdad, our city, let us be husband and wife. I give myself to you in marriage.”

“Yes,” the young man said, “you are my lady and my mistress. I shall do as you wish.”

“This man is all I need,” I told my sisters. “The other goods are yours to keep, but he is mine and I am his.” Envy gripped them and they wished me harm.

We sailed on with a good wind until we entered the Sea of Safety, Basra in our reach. That night, when the young man and I were sleeping, my two sisters, who had waited patiently, took up our bed and threw me in the sea, and did the same to the young man, who drowned.



"Envy gripped [my sisters] and they wished me harm." Illustration from Edward Forster's 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

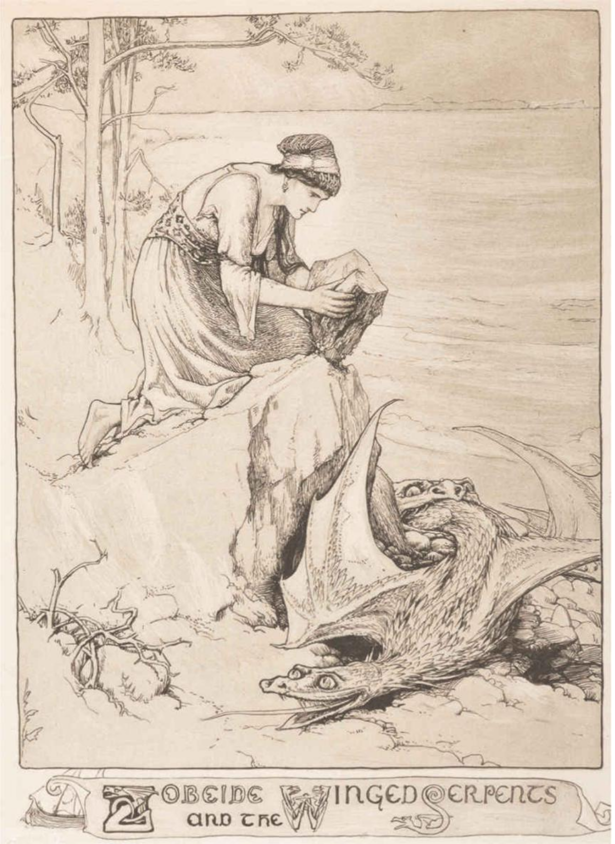
How I wish I had been drowned with him, but I was saved, cast on an island shore. When I woke and only water was around me, I knew my sisters had betrayed me and I gave thanks to God for saving me. The ship was off like lightning and I stayed alone all night.

When morning came, I saw a bare strip of land from the island to the shore, crossed it, and spread my clothes out in the sun to dry. Then I had some dates and water and walked on until the city was only two hours away.

As I sat to rest, I saw a serpent, thick as a palm tree, sweeping the sand left and right as it sped toward me. When it was close, I saw behind it a snake, slender as a lance and long as two, which overtook the serpent and seized it by the tail. I saw the serpent's eyes stream, its tongue drag in the dust, and I took pity on it, Commander of the Faithful. Picking up a stone and praying to God for help, I hit the snake and killed it. The serpent, seeing this, unfurled a pair of wings and flew off out of sight.

I sat to rest and sleep came over me. When I woke, I found a girl sitting at my feet, rubbing them in her hands, and two dogs beside her. Sitting up, I asked her who she was, and she said, "So soon forgotten! I am the one you saved,[110] the serpent you delivered from the snake (we are both jinn, he was my enemy). To thank you for your kindness, I flew to your ship and carried all that was in it to your house and sank the ship, and I changed your sisters to black dogs. I knew how good you were to them, and how they treated you and tried to take your life, and drowned the man you loved. Now I swear, by the one who raised the sky, that if you disobey me, I will trap you underground.”

The girl changed to a bird, picked me up with my two sisters (these two dogs), lifted us into the air, and set us down in my house, where I found all the property I had in my ship. Then the girl who had been the serpent said to me, “I swear, by the one who parted the seas, that if you disobey me, I will make you a dog like them. Every night you shall give them three hundred blows in punishment for what they did.”


ZOBEIDE AND THE WINGED SERPENTS

“I hit the snake and killed it.” Illustration by John D. Batten, from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

“I will,” I said.

She flew off and left me, and since that day I have not failed to beat them every night until they bleed. I weep for them and, knowing I am not to blame, they forgive me. This is my tale and my history.

* * *

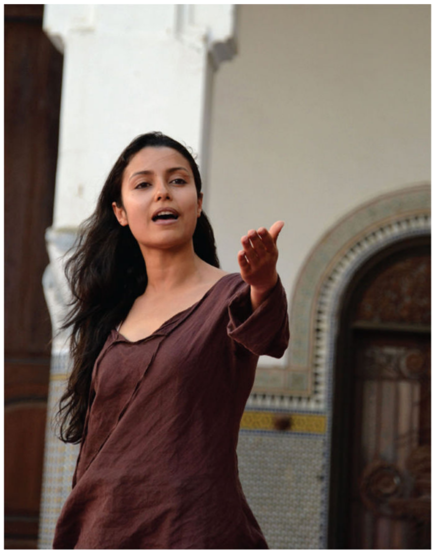
THE CALIPH WAS AMAZED. Then he had Jaafar ask the second woman, the keeper, to account for the blows on her body, and she said …

THE TALE OF THE SECOND WOMAN, THE KEEPER

WHEN MY FATHER DIED, he left me a great deal of money, and I married the richest man in Baghdad. For a year, I lived with him a happy life, then he too died and left me ninety thousand dinars, my legal share. I tasted luxury, collected gold, and had ten outfits made, a thousand dinars each. My fame spread in the city.

One day, as I sat at home, an old woman came to me with pallid cheeks and ragged brows and runny eyes and broken teeth and matted hair and crooked limbs. She greeted me and kissed the ground and said, “My lady, I have an orphan daughter whose wedding is tonight, but our hearts are broken. We are strangers in this city and do not know a soul, but if you come to the wedding, you will have rewards in heaven. Your presence will draw to us all the ladies of the city, and you will make my daughter happy.”

She wept and pressed me until, soft with pity, I agreed, and offered her my clothes and jewels to wear. The old woman, overjoyed, said, “May God comfort you as you have me. I will come to fetch you after dark.”



The keeper (Hajar Graigaa) tells her story. Rehearsals in Fez for Tim Supple's stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights. *Photo by Sophie Austin.*

Then I prepared the gifts, strung the pearls, and gathered the brocade and packed the ornaments and jewels. At night, the old woman returned with happy smiles and kissed my hand and said, "The ladies of the city have arrived. They are expecting you."

I rose, put on my cloak, and followed the old woman with my servants behind me. We walked until we reached an alley, freshly swept and scrubbed, and a door hung with black cloth, lit by a gilded lantern, and these lines were carved in letters of gold:

I am the house of joy
And comfort without end
Inside a fountain flows
With water made to mend
Where myrtle, daisy, rose
And gillyflowers grow

The old woman tapped the door. When it opened, we went in and saw[111] silk carpets and two rows of lighted candles, and at the far end was a couch of juniper wood set with gems and hung with a net of red silk.

Then, Commander of the Faithful, from inside the net emerged a girl, lovely as the moon when it is full, or dawning day. She said to me, “Welcome, dear sister!”

And she said these lines:

If the house could know who came this way
It would thrill at the news and kiss the ground
As if to greet its guest, as if to say
Well met and welcome to a gracious mind

Then she came up to me and said, “I have a brother, more beautiful than I, who has seen you at feasts and parties and noticed your charm. On hearing that you are, like him, the head of your house, he would like to link himself to you in marriage.”

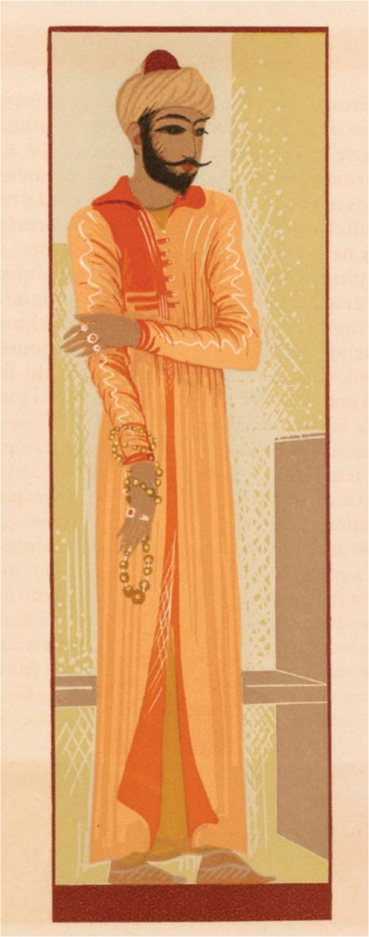
“Yes,” I said.

At my word, Commander of the Faithful, she clapped her hands and through a door came a young man, all symmetry and grace, brows like bows and eyes to hold a heart with holy spells, just as the poet says:

Like the new moon his face is bright
Like pearls his strewn delight

My heart was his at once.[112] He sat beside me, spoke to me a while. Then the girl clapped her hands a second time, and there appeared a judge and four witnesses, who sat and wrote the marriage contract. The young man made me pledge that I would never look at any other man, and he would not rest until I swore an oath. And so I did, impatient for the night to come, and when it came we had the sweetest time. In the morning he was kind, and for a month with him I lived a happy life.

One day, desiring fabric, I asked him for permission to buy some from the market, and when he granted it, I went with the old woman and two maids to the souq. As we reached the silk sellers, the old woman said,[113] “Here is a young merchant who has everything you may desire. No one in the souq has better cloth. Let us buy from him.”



“Through a door came a young man, all symmetry and grace.” Illustration by François-Louis Schmied, from Histoire Charmante de l’Adolescente Sucre d’Amour *(1927).*

We went in. There was a boy, pretty and slim, just as the poet said:

Slip of a thing[114]
Whose hair and blaze
Are to the world
Brightness and shade.
No flaw his cheek’s
Round mark—
Anemone’s
Black heart.

I said to the old woman, “Let him show us some nice cloth.”

“Ask him yourself,” she said.

“Do you not know,” I said, “that I have sworn never to speak to men?”

“Show us some cloth,” she said to him.

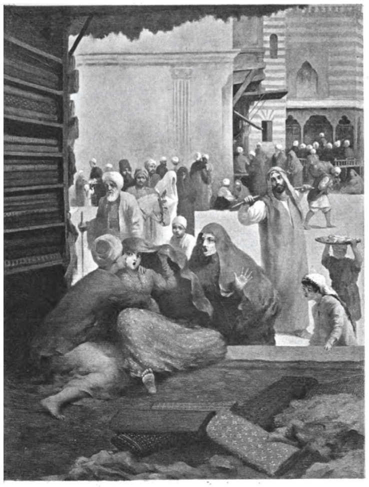
He showed us pieces, some I liked, and I asked the old woman to ask him for the price.

“I want no gold or silver for them,” said the boy, “but only a kiss on her cheek.”[115]

And I said, “God protect me.”

“You need not say a word to him,” said the old woman. “Just let him kiss your face.”

Her pressure worked. I closed my eyes and turned my face to him. His mouth, meeting my cheek, bit off a piece of flesh. I fainted. When I awoke a long time later, I saw that he had locked the shop and left. My face was bleeding, the old woman bending over me in grief …



“His mouth, meeting my cheek, bit off a piece of flesh.” Illustration by Albert Letchford, from A Series of Seventy Original Illustrations to Captain Sir R.F. Burton’s “Arabian Nights” *(1897).*

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And Shahrazad agreed.

“God has saved you from much worse,”[116] she said. “Get up and let us go. When you are home, pretend to be ill, cover yourself, and I will bring you balms and bandages to heal your cheek.”

I rose, and we walked slowly to the house, where I fell to the floor in pain, then lay in bed under the covers, sipping wine.

My husband, in the evening, came to me and said, “What is the matter?”

“My head aches.”

He lit a candle, came to look at me, saw my wounded cheek and said, “Who did this?”

“When I went to the souq for cloth,” I said, “a camel driver bearing wood knocked into me and tore my veil and cut my cheek. Our souq has narrow streets.”

“Tomorrow,” he said, “I will ask the governor to hang every camel driver in the city.”

“No need to hang a soul,” I said. “Why bear the guilt for all their deaths?”

“Who did it?”

“The truth is,” I said, “I was riding a donkey, and when its driver drove it hard, it stumbled, threw me to the ground, and I fell on a shard of glass and cut my cheek.”

“Tomorrow,” he said, “I shall ask Jaafar al-Barmaki to hang the donkey drivers and the sweepers of this city—every one!”

“That is not what happened,” I said. “Do not kill a man for me.”

“Then what cut your cheek?”

“It was God’s design,” I said.

But he went on pressing me, and I resisted, mumbling, until he drove me to speak sharper words. Then, Commander of the Faithful, he gave a shout and a door opened. Three slaves appeared and on his orders dragged me from my bed and threw me down onto my back. He ordered one to hold my head, another to sit on my knees, the third to draw his sword. And to the third my husband said, “Saad, cut her in half, and throw the pieces in the Tigris for the fish to eat. This is the punishment for those who break the vow."[117]

The slave bent down to me and said, "My lady, have you any wish before you die? This is the last hour of your life."

"Get off me," I said, "and let me speak."

I sat up, considering my state—how fame had turned into disgrace, life into death. I was choked with tears and wept, and said:

In love you made me stand and sat to rest.
You pricked my fretting eyes and fell asleep
And left me with your ghost and my regrets
To brood on you and weep.
You swore you would be constant to the end
But when you had my heart, you broke the vow.
I was a child. About love I knew nothing.
I am learning now.

When my husband heard these lines, his rage increased, and he said:

It was not out of boredom that I left
But hard necessity.
She wished to let a third into our pair:
I fled this blasphemy.

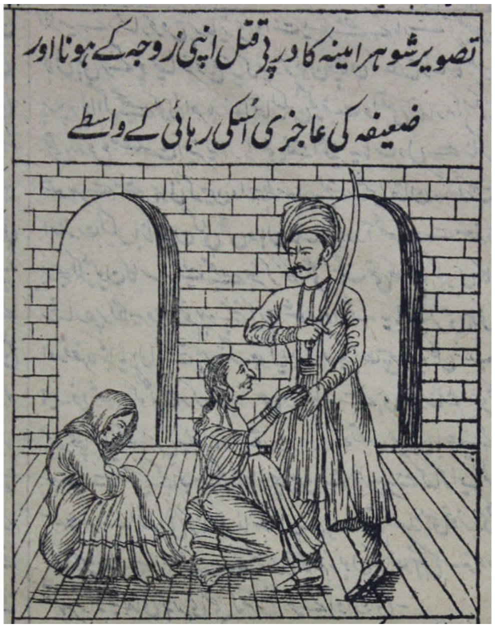
Then he shouted at the slave: "Cut her in half! We have no use for her."

Certain death was close, I gave up hope, when suddenly the old woman was there and threw herself at the man's feet in tears. "My son," she said, "by the bonds of time and care that are between us, forgive her for my sake. Her crime is not so great, and you are young. Why bear the guilt? Why bother? She is worthless. Drive her out of your house and heart."

She went on like this until he said, "All right, but I must mark her."

He told the slaves to strip me, stretch me on the floor and pin me down. Fetching a quince branch, they beat me on my back and sides until I lost all feeling and passed out. At night, he told the slaves to take me to my home and leave me there.

When I revived, I treated my wounds with balms and drugs. But my sides remained disfigured by the blows,[118] my skin by marks of beating, and it was four months before I was able to rise. And when at last I did, I went to look for my husband's house[119] and found it in ruins, the whole street torn down. In place of the house stood piles of rubbish, and I wondered.


تصویر شوہر امینہ کا درپے قتل اپنی زوجہ کے ہونا اور
ضعیفہ کی عاجزی اُسکی رہائی کے واسطے

The old woman pleads for the keeper's life. Illustration from an Urdu edition of the Nights, *translated by Muhammad Hamid 'Ali Khan (Lucknow, 1890). David Nathan-Maister, by permission.*

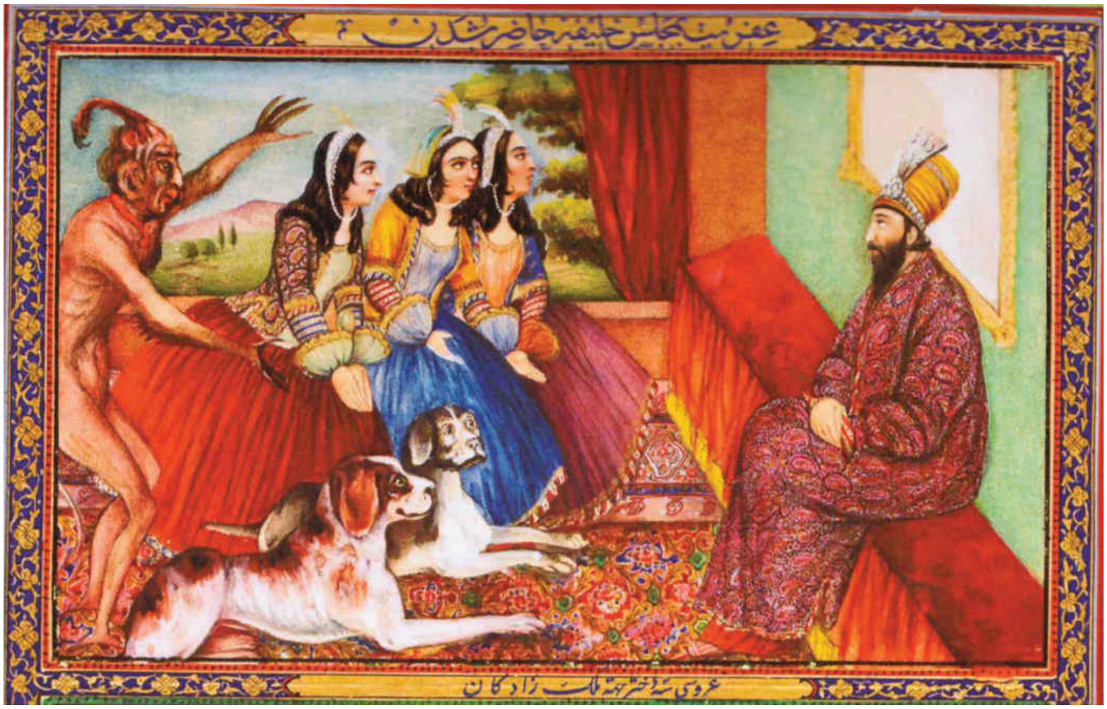
I went to see this woman, my sister on my father's side, and found her with these two black dogs and told her my story.

"Sister," she said, "who is safe from the trials of the world?"

And she told me her own story, what her sisters had done and what had become of them. We lived together without a thought for men or marriage, and soon we were joined by our other sister, the buyer, who would go every day to the market and see to our needs. So it was until yesterday, when our sister went to the market as usual and came back with the porter, then the dervishes, then you. That is our story.

* * *

The caliph was amazed at these adventures….



The jinni is summoned to transform the dogs back into women. The Golestan Palace Library manuscript of the 1843 Persian translation of One Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by painter and miniaturist Sani' al-Molk and his studio. Courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Then, turning to the owner, the first woman, he said, “Do you know what happened to the serpent jinni who turned your sisters into dogs?”

The owner said, “She gave me a lock of hair[120] and said, ‘If you should need me, burn some of these hairs and I will come at once, even if I am beyond Mount Qaf.’”

The caliph asked for the lock, and when she produced it, he burned a few hairs. The palace shook where it stood, and the jinni appeared and said, “Peace be with you. This woman has sown in me the seed of gratitude. I cannot reward her enough, for she killed my enemy and saved me from death. When I learned what her sisters had done, I resolved to avenge her and (fearing their deaths would be too hard on her) changed them to dogs. Now if you wish me to release them, I will do it gladly.”[121]

“Release them,” said the caliph, “then we shall consider the woman who was beaten. May God help me find the man who wronged her.”

“Once I release these dogs,” said the jinni, “I will reveal to you who her tormentor is. No man could be nearer to you.”

The jinni took a bowl of water, *my king*, and speaking words no one could understand, she sprinkled drops on the two dogs and changed them back to their first form.

“Commander of the Faithful,” said the jinni, “the man who beat this girl is your son, al-Amin, brother of al-Ma’mun. He had heard of her beauty and tricked her into marriage, but he is not to blame for beating her, for he bound her with a pledge she chose to break. He thought of killing her but feared the sin of murder and feared God, and he decided just to beat her and to send her home. That is the story of the second woman.”

The caliph was amazed and said, “Praise be to God who helped me free these women from their spell, and aided me a second time by showing me the truth of that woman’s story.”

Then he summoned his son al-Amin and asked him for his version of the story. Then he sent for the judge and witnesses, the three dervishes, the owner (and her two sisters who were cursed) and the keeper and the buyer.

He married the owner[122] (and her two sisters who were cursed) to the three dervishes, who were the sons of kings. The dervishes he made lords of his court, and gave them wealth and horses, everything they needed, a palace in Baghdad. And he married the keeper[123] to the man who beat her, his son al-Amin, under a new contract, and covered her with wealth and had the house rebuilt more finely than before. Then the caliph took as his own bride the buyer.[124] And from mouth to mouth the story spread of how the caliph had been just and wise,[125] and that is how it was remembered when it came to be recorded.

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1. *who worked as a porter:* This story, like many in the *Nights*, was likely composed in Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate. Although it was rewritten during the following centuries, it maintains its Baghdad setting, includes certain realistic details of urban life in the Abbasid capital, and features the historical figure of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (who ruled from 786 to 809 CE).

2. *a woman appeared before him:* Seale's translation of this passage emphasizes the singular quality of the shopper's clothes, which make a powerful impression on the porter. Husain Haddawy, in contrast, translates this more simply: "a fine kerchief embroidered with gold and a pair of leggings tied with fluttering laces."

3. *black eyes hooded and fringed with black:* Elliot Colla has noted the prevalence of references to "eyes" in this story cycle. In this instance, the woman's eyes are described through classical poetic figures associated with love in Arabic (pp. 97–98). This figurative language will be echoed in other character descriptions and interpolated poetry throughout the tale in developing the theme of romantic love suggested here.

4. *To the man who came down, a Christian:* This description of the market possesses the naturalistic detail featured in some of the urban tales in the *Nights*. It reflects both the religious diversity and the liveliness of Abbasid Baghdad, which was situated along important trade routes. Numerous markets flourished in the city during these years, and historical sources suggest that a wide range of luxuries and every imaginable type of fruit was available to its prosperous citizens (al-Musawi, pp. 102–3, 132). The Christian wine seller's trade would have been quite legitimate, despite the Muslim prohibition on the drinking of wine.

5. *"This way":* The tales of the *One Thousand and One Night*s are often given unity by the repetition of phrases such as this one. The interaction between the mysterious woman and the porter is shaped by their difference in social status and mediated by the transactions that define the marketplace.

6. *sugarcane from Iraq, fruit leather from Baalbek:* These details concerning the origins of all the wondrous offerings of Baghdad's market reveal an implicit narrative of imperial prosperity in the Abbasid period. According to Muhsin al-Musawi, the buyer's purchases all attest to an integrated political order with Baghdad at its center (p. 168).

7. *every sweet in the shop:* This passage highlights Seale's related talents for creating patterns of sound and coining inventive names for desserts that have no English equivalents. Seale notes that the movement in this list from the realistic to the fabulous echoes the progression in the story as a whole.

8. *ten bottles of scented water:* The market scene offers a wealth of naturalistic detail that appeals to a variety of senses. In this passage, the aromas associated with a life of luxury (scented water, frankincense, ambergris, musk) are combined with the tastes of sweet fruits and savory seasonings, the visual delights of the brilliantly colored flowers, and the tactile appeal of the rich

fabrics worn by the buyer. The sensual pleasures of this market scene offered inspiration to poet Christina Rossetti in the composition of “Goblin Market” (1862). Her reworking of the sexual subtext of the market meeting suggests that she was familiar with the translation of the *Nights* by Henry Torrens (1838), which included the sexual content omitted by Antoine Galland and Edward Lane in their editions.

9. *as the porter stood behind the buyer at the door:* In this version of the tale, the social role of each character is the principal means of identifying them. In her translation, Seale identifies the woman who first appears in the marketplace as “the buyer,” and this terminology is used throughout to distinguish her from her sisters—“the keeper” and “the owner.” In his translation of the *Nights*, Edward Lane reports that the three women were given proper names in other manuscripts: Amine for the buyer, Safiye for the keeper, and Zubeide for the owner (vol. 1, p. 193, n. 16).

10. *the porter followed the buyer inside:* The symbolic distinction between the private household and the public realm of the market is important in the thematic development of this story. The homes of the wealthy are clearly separated from public view and open up into a series of rooms and courtyards in which the privacy of the family can be preserved. This is a particularly elaborate example of this principle—symbolic of the many secrets that the women protect from the prying eyes of the outside world.

11. *a woman with glamour about her:* Each of the women is described with a sequence of images drawn from the poetic vocabulary of Arabic literature. The term *alif’s poise* refers to the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. An alif is written as a simple vertical stroke.

12. *he was amazed:* Readers see the narrative unfold from the viewpoint of the porter, the most naïve of the characters, thereby increasing the sense of wonder evoked by a narrative that takes readers into strange worlds and mysterious events.

13. *so it is for women without men:* Salman Rushdie borrows the plot of three sisters who seclude themselves from society to propel his own story in *Shame* (1983). While other re-tellers of this tale, such as Gabriel García Márquez or Hanan al-Shaykh, play upon its emancipatory potential, Rushdie deploys it to spin a more dystopian tale consistent with his vision of the cultural sterility of post-partition Pakistan. The elements repeat—the shopping list, the mystery of the house for outsiders, the invitation to an outsider—but the general atmosphere is stale, akin to the abandoned wedding party of Mrs. Havisham in *Great Expectations*. García Márquez and al-Shaykh are more interested respectively in the freedom of the buyer in the market and the world the women make for themselves in their own home.

14. *“I am a man of sense and care”:* The social hierarchies of urban society can be read in the distinct professions and social ranks represented in the story, as well as in the patterns of speech and conduct associated with them. Transgressing these social boundaries was difficult in reality, but possible in stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights* when supernatural agency—or, in this case, a character’s wit—could bridge the divide between them. In Arab society, knowledge of poetry and eloquence of speech were essential indicators of those who possessed the sophistication necessary to circulate in the highest social circles of Abbasid Baghdad. In this scene, the porter must give evidence of his quality to cross the social barrier that stands between him and the wealthy women of Baghdad.

15. *believed himself in a dream:* This story cycle contains a series of moments in which characters enter a dreamlike state that seems to operate according to a different logic than the realistic frame set in the city market. In her analysis, Sandra Naddaff suggests that two different worlds intersect in this story—a realistic world and a metaphorical world. The porter, who represents the prosaic realm of the marketplace, will struggle to find his bearings in the world created by the three Baghdadi women, where language and sexuality are intertwined.

16. *"The wine will bring you health":* The use of alcohol was opposed in Muslim religious treatises, but Muhsin al-Musawi suggests that there is a significant body of literature celebrating the drinking of wine in medieval Islamic lands (pp. 170–71). Edward Lane noted in his translation of the *Nights* that alcohol was not usually present in general society in Egypt (despite references to it in the tales), but that many indulged in drinking wine with select company in private (vol. 1, pp. 193–94, n. 22). In the household at the center of this story, the rules are set by the three sisters, and no one seems surprised by the introduction of wine as part of an evening of pleasure that unfolds beyond the taboos that prevail in the outside world.

17. *Surfacing, the keeper danced in the spray:* The sexual content in these scenes was a challenge for the first translators of the story into English. Edward Lane simply declined to translate them. He ends, "They threw off all restraint, indulging their merriment with as much freedom as if no man had been present." In his note, he explains, "I here pass over an extremely objectionable scene, which, it is to be hoped, would convey a very erroneous idea of the manners of Arab ladies" (vol. 1, p. 125 and p. 193, n. 22). Henry Torrens, in contrast, was committed to capturing the sensuality of the tales of the *Nights* because he saw it as an essential component of the poetic spirit that he admired in the collection. His translation, which appeared in 1838, shocked Victorian reviewers with its boldness. Richard Burton had no qualms about including explicit sexual scenes for his privately circulated version of the *Nights* published in 1885. In his note, he naturalizes this content with reference to Boccaccio and the Arabic collection of fables known as *Kalila wa-Dimna*, based on the Indian *Panchatantra* (vol. 1, p. 91, n. 1).

18. *"Basil of bridges":* In this private realm occupied and governed by the three sisters, a metaphorical language closely connected with the body is spoken, and the porter must learn the logic of this new way of understanding the world.

19. *SPEAK OF WHAT CONCERNS THEE NOT:* The rules set by the three women prohibit excessive curiosity and urge discretion on their visitors. This establishes a principal theme that links the embedded stories to the frame tale of "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad." The violation of this prohibition will propel the plot forward into a night of tale-telling, and this warning against curiosity will reappear in the ensuing tales of the three dervishes.

20. *"three dervishes, each with a shaven head and face and blind in the right eye":* A dervish is a Sufi mystic who lives an ascetic life dedicated to the pursuit of the Divine. In other translations, these three characters are known as the mendicants or qalandars—terms that emphasize their poverty. The qalandars were a particular brotherhood of mendicants who shaved off their hair, beard, mustache, and eyebrows (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, pp. 537–38). The similarities in the physical appearance of the three characters evoke astonishment and enhance the sense of wonder at the events unfolding in this story cycle.

21. *They began to play:* Richard Burton imagined that this scene of the women singing lustily would have been very scandalous to Muslim "respectability." In other *Nights* stories, singing was

usually done by slaves. The second movement of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite *Schéhérazade* (1888) seems to have taken its cue from this tale. Labeled "The Tale of the Kalendar Prince," it seems to follow the dervish prince on a search for wisdom through a musical theme that reflects the mystical dance of the Sufi whirling dervishes (Al-Taee, p. 287).

22. *On that very night, Caliph Harun al-Rashid:* This story is one of dozens of tales in the *Nights* in which the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid plays a part. In a pattern repeated many times, the caliph finds himself too restless to sleep and instead roams Baghdad disguised as a merchant, along with his vizier Jaafar. In some stories, he is looking for evidence of abuses that he might redress, but in other stories he is seeking distraction or amusement. This device was adopted by later writers of fiction. In *New Arabian Nights* (1882), Robert Louis Stevenson creates a frame story in which Prince Florizel and Colonel Geraldine wander the streets of nineteenth-century London in disguise to relate six tales of adventure, murder, and suicide. References to Harun al-Rashid wandering the streets of Baghdad run through many of the works of James Joyce. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, like the legendary caliph, wanders the streets in disguise: "Bloom … draws his caliph's hood and poncho and hurries down the steps with sideways face. Incog Haroun Al Raschid" (p. 478).

23. *"My lady, we are merchants":* The conventional disguise of a merchant adopted by the caliph reveals something of the fantasies of the original audience for the *1001 Nights*. In these stories, Harun appears to be a ruler who is willing to get close to his people—who is sympathetic to the plights of the merchants, tradesmen, shopkeepers, and fishermen that he encounters on his wanderings through the city. There is little of the historical Harun al-Rashid here—his distinguished war campaigns, his frequent pilgrimages to Mecca, the difficulties of his reign, and his decision to execute his vizier Jaafar and imprison many of his kin. Mia Gerhardt argues that the Harun of the *Nights* is a bourgeois figure, "peace-loving, prosperity-loving, conservative." He is focused only on private diversions and ensuring the happiness of his subjects in Baghdad (p. 468).

24. *"That you be eyes without tongues":* This phrase cleverly encapsulates the essential tension that runs through these stories. The visitors' failure to control their curiosity will destroy the unique fellowship of pleasure, established in the first part of the story, and of course put the offenders' heads on the block.

25. *All the while, the talk and drink ran on:* In the later stories of the *Nights*, the character of Harun al-Rashid often indulges in drinking and other amusements with cup companions like the poet Abu Nuwas. His participation in the festivities here does not match the historical Caliph Harun al-Rashid, who reportedly was a "pious and austere figure" (Irwin, pp. 154–55), and, in the *Nights* manuscript translated by Burton and Lyons, the caliph refuses alcohol in this story because he is preparing for a pilgrimage.

26. *and beat the howling dog until her arm was sore:* Marcel Proust was an avid reader of the *Nights* and often wove references to the stories into his writing. In *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*), he compares the sight of Baron de Charles being flogged in a homosexual brothel to a *Nights* tale "in which a woman who has been turned into a dog willingly submits to being beaten in order to recover her former shape" (vol. 6, p. 175).

27. *The caliph's heart burned in his chest:* The caliph is consumed with curiosity, but his vizier Jaafar is there to play his usual role as a buffer between the caliph and the world. The historical

Jaafar al-Barmaki was a savvy politician from a powerful family and enjoyed the special favor of Caliph Harun al-Rashid until his execution in 803 CE (six years before the death of Harun). In the stories of the *Nights*, he plays the role of Harun's confidant and companion and is often called upon to control the rash impulses of the caliph.

28. *"You are what I/Crave and desire":* In Arabic culture, poetry was considered the preeminent literary mode in which to express emotions such as love and loss; in moments like this, the storyteller has inserted verse that employs poetic language to carry these emotions to the audience. In translating this story, Yasmine Seale has likened such moments to an aria in an opera, where one pauses to linger on a moment of emotional climax.

29. *the caliph saw the marks of blows and lashes:* In the context of this story, these marks are an extension of a private language of the body that remains illegible to the outsider. The caliph will insist that these mysteries be deciphered. Such secrets cannot be allowed to survive under the authoritative gaze of the Commander of the Faithful.

30. *When her sister's song was done:* The displays of passion and despair in the songs of the buyer and the response of the keeper exemplify the themes that will run through the embedded stories that follow.

31. *All the men agreed but Jaafar:* The vizier tries to prevent disaster but he is outnumbered. The text notes that he is only one of seven guests. The unnamed seventh person might be Masrur, the caliph's executioner (who typically accompanied him on his wanderings). The historical Jaafar al-Barmaki was reputedly a clever politician and a gifted speaker, although in this story his skills are insufficient to master the hunger of his caliph for explanations.

32. *"Wait," she said, "I have questions":* In this case, the curiosity of the owner plays the role of the jinni in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni." She hesitates to let the swords fall in the hope of hearing the stories of her unexpected guests.

33. *"If you were to carve it with a needle in the corner of the eye":* This phrase is a common way of describing a particularly astonishing story, and it is especially apt for a tale that develops the symbolism of the eye over a number of embedded stories.

34. *"those who don't shall lose it":* This decision creates another example of the ransom frame structure also seen in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," in which stories are told to prevent a life from being lost. Gerhardt suggests that this ransom frame is not as compelling as the first example, since the women are not as fearsome a threat as the jinni in that story. The ransom frame does, however, provide the opportunity for the three interpolated stories that follow—with their themes of subversive passion and violent retribution.

35. *"When the wine had overcome us":* As in the frame of "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," the drinking of wine sets the stage for the indulgence of forbidden desires.

36. *"cover us with earth":* The cousin has brought a bag of mortar and water to the tomb, but we do not see him ask the narrator to seal up the tomb after him. He merely covers it with earth.

37. *he set upon me with his finger:* The stories of the *Nights* were often unsettling for readers accustomed to clearer chains of consequence and moral judgment. The blinding of the prince for

a youthful accident with a crossbow seemed to lack proportion to readers like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who responded to this prompt by exploring the unsettling qualities of supernatural retribution in poems such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

38. *"This is your punishment on earth":* This story of transgressive love in a hidden subterranean chamber is echoed by the tales of the other two dervishes. The image of bodies consumed by fire has a parallel in the death of the princess in "The Tale of the Second Dervish." Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen suggest that the story of the first dervish was probably taken from another source and adapted to fit with the other two dervish tales (p. 338).

39. *"God has forbidden her to you":* While the *Nights* celebrates the spirit of romantic love, severe punishment is the lot of those who break fundamental taboos, such as the prohibition against incest, or who indulge in infidelity, as in the frame tale of Shahriyar. For his role in facilitating this incestuous relationship, the prince in this story will face dire consequences.

40. *live the dervish life:* The first dervish has been brought down from the prominence of a prince to become a despised stranger. In taking on the identity of a Sufi dervish, he is choosing to live a life of poverty and solitude in search of the spiritual truths that lie behind this change in fortune. Muhsin al-Musawi argues that, within an Islamic context, the prince's fall can be interpreted as a sign of human frailty—evident in the prince's inability to sufficiently adhere to his Islamic faith (p. 205).

41. *dreaming I might even find my way into the presence of the caliph:* In this sequence of stories, Baghdad represents the spatial center of the narrative universe. The caliph symbolizes the one earthly authority who might bring meaning to events whose causes still mystify the dervish-prince.

42. *I studied law with scholars:* The protagonist of this story exemplifies the value of education within the culture of medieval Islam. He is an accomplished prince well trained in law, literature, and calligraphy, but he will find that, outside the noble circles to which he belongs, these skills are of little use.

43. *They were highwaymen:* The danger of robbers on the roads of trading routes was a constant concern for medieval merchants. In the *Nights*, it is assumed that once the characters leave the safety of the city, their lives are in danger from robbers and Bedouin.

44. *I reached a city, bright and peopled and safe:* The city is clearly contrasted with the dangers of the road. The dervishes' tales, which take the characters far beyond the familiar world of their own kingdoms, present the city as a haven of security as well as a center of commerce.

45. *As I went into the wild one day:* The prince has ended up outside the realm of the city, where the order imposed by the Commander of the Faithful in Baghdad is lacking and the chances of encountering jinn or monstrous creatures is much greater.

46. *I went down the steps:* As in "The Tale of the First Dervish," the second prince discovers a story of forbidden desire in a hidden underground chamber.

47. *"But on my wedding night":* Jinn were believed to abduct beautiful young women and hide them in remote locations, as the example of the jinni's captive bride in the opening tale of "King

Shahriyar and His Vizier’s Daughter, Shahrazad” indicates.

48. *“If dreams are true”:* Each dervish tale contains a reference to a dreamlike state in which passion is given free rein in an echo of the atmosphere of the home of the three women of Baghdad. In this sequence of stories, these dream spaces always carry within them a dangerous undercurrent.

49. *But drink had overpowered me:* As in “The Tale of the First Dervish,” wine has loosened the prince’s control on his emotions and punishment will surely follow.

50. *the jinni, a monster of ugliness:* This jinni is portrayed as a hideous monster and will be revealed as Jarjaris, the descendant of Iblis. Essentially, he is the son of the devil’s daughter.

51. *I closed the door and covered it with earth:* The parallel with the first dervish’s tale is made clear in this repeated phrase in Seale’s translation.

52. *there appeared the Persian man:* The jinni is a shape-shifter and can take whatever form he chooses. In his pioneering work of nineteenth-century fantasy, *Suspiria de Profundis*, Thomas De Quincey confessed that images of the horrific jinni tracking down the young man who has slept with his wife were forever associated in his mind with the guilty sensation of being found out: “It appeared, then, that I had been reading a legend concerning myself in the *Arabian Nights*. I had been contemplated in types a thousand years before on the banks of the Tigris” (quoted in Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 268).

53. *“How can I strike the neck of one I do not know”:* The captive woman protects her lover with great bravery. She may be an analogue of the jinni’s captive bride in the frame tale in certain respects, but she acts unselfishly and suffers the consequences for the foolishness of her lover. Within the context of Shahrazad’s stories, she may be numbered among the women who display exemplary loyalty, even under torture. If “The Tale of the Enchanted Prince” offers perhaps the worst example of female betrayal, “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad” offers a wide array of female characters to prompt Shahriyar to rethink his views of women.

54. *Our eyes spoke for a while:* This scene once again demonstrates the importance of the motif of the eye within the story cycle. Seale’s expression here condenses this imagery into an elegant statement of the lovers’ romantic connection.

55. *“This is the punishment of those who cheat”:* The link to the gruesome retribution of Shahriyar and Shahzaman in the opening tale of the *One Thousand and One Nights* is clear. For his crime, the fallen prince will receive the same punishment as the evildoers in the embedded tales of “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni.” The highly cultivated prince, having already lost his social position, will now lose his humanity altogether. In his reading of this story, Todorov interprets the jinni as a personification of the man’s bad luck (*The Fantastic*, p. 110).

56. *The Envied and the Envier:* The motive for this embedded tale is once again to stave off death and to teach a lesson that might save the storyteller from the vengeance of the listener. The parallel to Shahrazad’s efforts in the original frame tale is obvious. The particular story that follows corresponds to a well-known international tale type, but al-Musawi notes the distinctive concern with envy in the Islamic context. The ninth-century Arab writer al-Jahiz argued that envy

was even worse than enmity, for while wrath will generally pass, “envy never dies except when either the envious person or the one of whom he is envious dies” (p. 101).

57. *the old well happened to be haunted by jinn:* Edward Lane reported that wells were considered a common abode of jinn and that when Arabs let a bucket down a well, they first say, “Permission!” The jinn in this scene have lived compatibly with the dervish and are clearly believers. One also appears to have knowledge of future events, which is another quality that was imputed to jinn. This knowledge could be gained by approaching the lowest level of heaven and eavesdropping on the conversations of angels (Lane, vol. 1, pp. 30–31, n. 21).

58. *“pluck seven white hairs”:* The possibility of jinn possession is disputed by Islamic scholars, but there are many popular accounts of the phenomenon. This method of disenchantment resembles the method used to invoke a particular jinni at the conclusion of “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.”

59. *“Pardon this crime”:* The prince acknowledges that he has committed a grievous offense. The agent of fate may be supernatural, but the crime is clear and punishment will follow.

60. *he took a little dust and spoke to it under his breath:* In his notes to his translation of the *Nights*, Edward Lane explained that metamorphoses are “generally effected by means of spells or invocations to Jinn, accompanied by the sprinkling of water or dust, etc., on the object to be transformed” (vol. 1, p. 59, n. 15).

61. *I was changed at once into an ape:* This punishment mirrors that of several characters in the embedded tales of “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni,” and it has sometimes been considered evidence of an Indian origin for this story. Robert Irwin argues that the prince’s transformation need not be considered an echo of Buddhist or Hindu belief in reincarnation, since the motif is pervasive in the world’s folklore. He suggests that a link to the ape form of the ancient Egyptian god of the scribes is just as likely (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 70).

62. *And I wrote many more lines in different hands:* The manuscript names a series of cursive Arabic scripts through which the prince-ape shows his mastery of the art of calligraphy: Ruqa’, Muhaqqiq, Raihani, Nashki, Thuluth, and Tumar. The Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini includes the story of the man transformed into a monkey by a jinni in *Il fiore delle Mille e una Notte* (1974). In the film, the king is so impressed by the monkey’s beautiful script that he has him brought to court, where he will be recognized by the princess and restored to his human form. This device also appears in Ray Harryhausen’s *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977), where a man who has been transformed into a monkey reveals his humanity through a demonstration of writing. The plot hinges on a quest to prove the enchanted prince’s true identity.

63. *“This is a wonder”:* Irwin suggests that such tales of remarkable animals were reported as fact as well as fiction in medieval Arab lands. A treatise of the thirteenth-century Syrian scholar Al-Jawbari contains a story of a well-trained ape in the city of Harran that could make gestures of salutation, perform rituals of ablution and prayer, and weep. The ape reportedly claimed to an audience in a mosque that it was actually a prince whose wife had turned him into an ape when she suspected him of falling in love with a slave girl. Al-Jawbari claimed to have witnessed this marvel, but Irwin suspects that either the fiction inspired the report or the report inspired the *Nights* story (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 132).

64. *Kunafa in a buttered honey bath:* Kunafa is an Arab dessert particularly popular in the Levant and Egypt. It is made from shredded filo pastry soaked in a sweet syrup and layered with cheese or nuts, depending on local custom.

65. *Our first game was a draw:* Games of chess appear in a series of stories in the *Nights*. Here they stand as a marker of the ape-prince's humanity and good breeding. Beneath his transformed appearance is a man clearly educated in the culture of *adab*, required in the highest social circles. In "The Tale of Tawaddud," the brilliant slave similarly proves her quality at court with a victory over the best chess and backgammon players in Baghdad, as well as through debates on philosophy, astronomy, and theology. The marvel of the ape excelling at chess is another plot device borrowed by Ray Harryhausen for the film *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977).

66. *"From whom do you cover your face?":* In each story containing a magical transformation, there is usually evidence of a corresponding magical ability to detect the true inner identity of the transformed creature. Here the princess demonstrates this skill, just as the shepherd's daughter recognizes the merchant's son inside the calf in "The Tale of the First Old Man" and the sorceress recognizes King Badr inside the bird in the "The Story of Julnar of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Basim."

67. *"let me make him my vizier and marry you to him":* This is the preferred ending to many tales in the *Nights*, and it has already been suggested by the interpolated story of "The Envied and the Envier." It foreshadows a potential resolution for the Porter cycle as a whole.

68. *The king's daughter took a knife:* The princess uses her knowledge of magic to invoke a jinni, but for battle rather than for aid. Edward Lane explained that such invocations use the names of the Deity, the Prophet, and angels and good jinn, as well as passages from the Qur'an, and "mysterious combinations of numbers and figures" (vol. 1, p. 59, n. 15). The Hebrew letters carved on the knife may represent a protective charm.

69. *from her head she plucked a hair:* Ruth Bottigheimer explains this as an example of synecdochic magic, in which the hair the princess plucks from her head embodies her great store of magic knowledge, which can now be wielded as a weapon against the evil jinni.

70. *When the cat was overcome:* This famous battle between the jinni and the king's daughter is a clash of transformations in which success depends on speed and wit. There is a similar contest in the story of "The Thief and His Master," in the Grimms' collection of fairy tales. In *Modern Painters* (1843–60), John Ruskin uses the image of a jinni in a bottle as a symbol of the imagination, but literature is represented as the shape-shifting princess from this story—capable of redeeming the enchanted prince and restoring his humanity. The magical transformations of this battle attracted the attention of filmmaker Lotte Reiniger, who made them into an important episode in her *Nights*-inspired film, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, in 1926. She rendered the rapid shifts of form using her distinctive technique of silhouette animation to show the victory of the benevolent witch over the monstrous demon of Waq-Waq.

71. *"There is no power and no strength except in God!":* Despite her exceptional training in magic, the princess invokes the power of God in her battle with the jinni, for He remains the ultimate arbiter of this wild contest.

72. *Then she was nothing but a heap of ashes:* The fate of the magician-princess mirrors that of the doomed lovers in “The Tale of the First Dervish,” but it is more difficult to find any justice in her fate. In his interpretation of this story, al-Musawi claims that her death was the consequence of her participation in unlawful magic (pp. 257–58), but it may be more akin to the tragic fate of the jinni’s bride earlier in the story.

73. *I shaved off my beard and eyebrows:* Muhsin al-Musawi likens the journey of the three princes to a Sufi tale in which the character moves from desire and apparent paradisiacal bliss to self-reproach and finally resignation to the will of God. Taking on the physical characteristics of a dervish is symbolic of the final stage in this journey (p. 163).

74. *bound for Baghdad:* The Abbasid capital of Baghdad symbolizes security and peace in these stories, and each of the dervishes travels to the city with the hope that the authority exercised by the caliph will give coherence and meaning to the strange twists of fate that make up his life story.

75. *I, Ajib ibn Khasib:* Unlike the other dervishes, the third has a name. In his analysis of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Roy Mottahedeh points out that ‘Ajib means “The Astonishing One,” and it is the perfect name for a character in a story cycle filled with strange and wondrous tales (p. 34).

76. *Hungry for the islands:* The prince in this story seems to possess a dangerous excess of curiosity from the very beginning. It is the same hunger for new lands that brings disaster upon Sinbad again and again.

77. *“a black mountain of a mineral called lodestone”:* “The Tale of the Third Dervish” was one of Charles Dickens’s favorite *Nights* tales, and he used the sinister lodestone rock as one of the organizing metaphors in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The inexorable magnetic pull of the lodestone of France will eventually lead Charles Darnay to imprisonment and a death sentence.

78. *“on the dome is a rider on a horse of brass”:* When Baghdad was commissioned as a planned circular city in 762 CE, the caliph’s palace was positioned at the center and its dome was reportedly ornamented by a bronze horseman whose lance pointed in the direction from which an enemy might be expected to attack (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 123). The link to the brass horseman in this story ties it more closely to the symbolic center of the Abbasid capital.

79. *the nails and every iron part flew out:* Goethe references the power of the magnetic mountain in *The Sufferings of Young Werther* (1774) to explain the irresistible attraction of his hero to the object of his affection: “More than once I have made the resolve not to see her so often. If one could only keep such a resolution!” Like the ships that sail too close to the magic mountain in the story told by his grandmother, Werther finds that a walk to Wahlheim inevitably draws him to her doorstep: “I am too near her atmosphere—zoom, I’m there.” (Translation by Harry Steinhauer, 1970, p. 29.)

80. *And in a dream, I saw a speaker say:* Dreams are often used as a narrative device in the *Nights*; they were widely accepted as a mode of divination in Arab lands. Within the story collection, dreams generally have a clear and obvious meaning and reveal a destiny that inevitably will come to pass.

81. *a man of brass:* Robert Irwin has described the interest of medieval Arabs in the creation of automatons as a legacy from the ancient Greeks. These mechanical devices were powered by wind, water, weights, or springs, but popular superstitions claimed they were powered by magic (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 189). The brass automaton in this story wears a tablet carved with various names and charms that seem to invoke the power of magic. The bronze boat-rowing automaton is another motif that plays a pivotal role in Ray Harryhausen's film *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977).

82. *In the peak of joy, I said God's name:* The prince has been warned not to reveal his devotion to God as the brass oarsman rows him to safety.

83. *"one night he dreamed":* This is another example of the belief in the predictive value of dreams in the stories of the *Nights*.

84. *"The astrologers, however, noted my birth date":* Astrology was widely accepted as a mode of divination, and the predictions of astrologers play a role in a number of stories in the *Nights*. In "The Tale of Tawaddud," the brilliant slave lectures the court scholars about auspicious and sinister aspects of the planets, but she is careful to point out that only God can truly know the future. When an astrological prediction appears as a narrative device in the *Nights*, efforts to evade an evil conjunction of the stars are seldom successful. What is fated will come to pass, for it is ultimately God's will that prevails.

85. *Love grew in my heart:* This tale is linked to those of the first and second dervishes by the motif of transgressive love in an underground cavern. Overcome with his love for the handsome youth, the prince foolishly imagines that he will somehow avoid his fate.

86. *still I killed him:* The futility of defying prophecy in this tale perfectly encapsulates why Ted Chiang sets his time-traveling parable about the acceptance of fate ("The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate") in the universe of the *Arabian Nights* (in *Exhalation*, pp. 3–36). Fascinated by a talk by the physicist Kip Thorne, Chiang felt that "the recursive nature of time-travel stories might mesh well with the 'Arabian Nights' convention of tales within tales" (*Exhalation*, p. 342).

87. *covered it with earth:* Yasmine Seale repeats this phrase in each dervish tale, and in each case it represents the tragic end of a forbidden love.

88. *a far-off blaze caught my attention:* The discovery of the palace resembles the discovery of the City of Brass in another *Nights* tale. It also appears in the desert as two bursts of flame when the sun reflects upon the brilliant gates of brass.

89. *"do not ask us how we lost our eyes":* The warning against unrestrained curiosity is repeated from the frame tale of "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," as is the order to "give us our due" as a prelude to ritualistic acts of penance.

90. *The old man brought the trays of dust and soot:* Charles Dickens used this image of despair in *Little Dorrit* to describe the oppressive atmosphere of London when Arthur Clennam returns to the city after many years away: "Ten thousand responsible houses surrounded him, frowning as heavily on the streets they composed, as if they were every one inhabited by the ten young men of the Calender's story, who blackened their faces and bemoaned their miseries every night" (book I, chap. 3).

91. *“A bird known as a rukh”:* The rukh, a huge bird in Arab folklore, makes a number of appearances in the *Nights*, most significantly in the second and fifth voyages of Sinbad the Sailor.

92. *Stepping through an open door:* The prince’s entry into the palace is reminiscent of the porter’s invitation into the home of the three women of Baghdad. The pleasures of the eye will be accompanied by the same playful indulgence in food, wine, song, and sex.

93. *“you must never open the door of red gold”:* In the Arabic manuscript there are references to both forty rooms and one hundred rooms; in line with some other editions of the *Nights*, we have changed the number of doors to forty to match the number of women and the number of days that they are away. The motif of a forbidden door appears in other stories of the *Nights*, such as “The Tale of Hasan of Basra” and “The Man Who Never Laughed.” The irresistible temptation of the door for the protagonist ties this tale firmly to the dangers of curiosity expressed in the opening of “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.” References to the story of the third dervish were common in Victorian England. William Henley’s poem, *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, invokes that prince “On whom ’twas vehemently enjoined,/Pausing at one mysterious door,/To pry no closer, but content his soul/With his kind Forty.” Charles Dickens references the door in *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), when, on his departure to London, Mr. Pecksniff tells Martin that he is free to roam the house: “There is no mystery; all is free and open. Unlike the young man in the Eastern tale—who is described as a one-eyed almanac, if I am not mistaken” (chap. 6). He is corrected in his terminology by the good-hearted Tom Pinch, but the reference was familiar enough to a Victorian reader for the message to be clear.

94. *came into a place like Paradise:* There are a number of analogues of Paradise in the *Nights*, but this palace is one of the most potent images. Muhsin al-Musawi explains that Paradise in the Qur’an is “the utmost beauty and grandeur,” and to lose it would be the most crushing of losses (pp. 86–87). This realization lies behind the despair of the ten young men in this tale and the fates of all three dervishes.

95. *I was carried up into the sky:* The flying horse in this tale is mirrored in “The Enchanted Horse,” a tale included in the French edition of the *Nights* by translator Antoine Galland from a story he heard from Hanna Diyab.

96. *“Each lived a life of sheer delight”:* Muhsin al-Musawi argues that the stories of the three dervishes should be seen as spiritual quests within an Islamic context: “In order not to confuse human gifts with God’s, there should be a pivotal point, a human paradisiacal bliss, to test the human will and to demonstrate man’s propensity to curiosity.” Failing this test leads to a state of self-blame and regret (p. 57).

97. *“Take these men to the palace”:* The three dervishes have succeeded in reaching Baghdad and delivering their tales to the caliph. Their stories will take on new meaning as they are recorded for posterity.

98. *“so tell him the truth and nothing but the truth”:* The embedded stories that follow are not part of a ransom frame but are compelled by the authority of the caliph. Within the *Nights* tales in which he appears, Harun al-Rashid often demands stories as a means of entertainment or to satisfy his hunger for knowledge. A similar pattern can be found in “The Night Adventures of

Harun al-Rashid," a story added to the *Arabian Nights* by Antoine Galland, based on a tale he heard from the Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab.

99. *Then she returned to me, dressed like a beggar:* "The Tale of the First Woman" echoes central elements of "The Tale of the Second Old Man" in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni." The gender of the three brothers in the earlier tale is switched here, and the incompetence or malfeasance of the two sisters' husbands becomes an additional complicating factor in the story. In both stories, the hero/heroine offers aid to a female jinni (jinniya) and falls in love, but in the second old man's narrative, these figures are combined.

100. *"I have made much money spinning silk":* The eldest of the sisters has taken on the qualities of a successful merchant in this tale, and she demonstrates little inclination to follow her sisters into marriage.

101. *"No good can come of marriage":* In a collection where marriage is a frequent symbol of the end of strife and the return of social order, the tales of the Baghdadi sisters offer a subversive demonstration of the vulnerability of women within the institution of marriage, despite the protections offered by Islamic law.

102. *I found a gate of red gold spread with silk:* When William Rossetti collected his sister Christina Rossetti's poetry in a new volume in 1904, he noted that the *Arabian Nights* was one of the few books that she read frequently from an early age. "The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner" inspired Rossetti's "The Dead City," first published in 1847 in a book of her childhood verse.

But a lamp above a gate
Shone in solitary state
O'er a desert drear and cold,
O'er a heap of ruins old,
O'er a scene most desolate.

By that gate I entered lone
A fair city of white stone;
And a lovely light to see
Dawned, and spread most gradually
Till the air grew warm and shone.

Through the splendid streets I strayed
In that radiance without shade;
Yet I heard no human sound;
All was still and silent round
As a city of the dead.

103. *a gem large as an ostrich egg:* Peter Caracciolo argues that "The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner" and elements of the frame narrative of "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" are mirrored in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), which centers on the theft

of a large diamond from India that can only be solved through the telling of a sequence of tales (“Wilkie Collins,” pp.164–66).

104. *I went from room to room, lost in amazement:* This petrified city is one of several cities in the *Nights* that offer a warning of the fragility of human civilization in the face of divine power. In “The Tale of the City of Brass,” the characters also find, laid out before them, a city of astounding riches frozen in time and a beautiful queen adorned with precious gems. While contemporary science-fiction writers usually set imaginary societies in the future, Robert Irwin argues that tales in the *Nights* locate them in the past and ask questions about how such grand cities could have met their doom (pp. 212–13). Precisely such a question informs *The Shaitan Preaches* (1979), a play by Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz in which the explorers of a dead city see it brought back to life and interact with its citizens to discover their unusual customs.

105. *reading from the Qur’an:* In explaining the Islamic context of this story, Muhsin al-Musawi points out that the presence of one person reciting from the Qur’an is a reminder of the reasons for the calamity that has been suffered by this kingdom and may presage renewal (pp. 76–77).

106. *“They and all the people here were Magians”:* In the *Nights*, Zoroastrians are called Magians, and because they are seen within Islam as infidels practicing an idolatrous religion, they sometimes have the roles of villains in the stories (for instance, in “The Fourth Voyage of Sinbad” and “The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur”).

107. *“Until one day the city was turned to stone”:* This petrified city demonstrates the consequences of ignoring the Prophet’s call to embrace Islam. Other explanations are provided for other dead cities in the *Nights*. The City of Brass, for instance, falls because of the effects of famine, despite all its riches. In “The Dead City,” Christina Rossetti borrows this explanation for the city’s ruin: “Then the breezes whispered me:/Enter in, and look, and see/How for luxury and pride/A great multitude have died.” In his poem “The Sleeping City,” George Meredith overlays the empty Arab palace from this story on the nocturnal city of London.

108. *I pressed him:* Partly inspired by the narrator’s bold pursuit of the young man in this scene, Naguib Mahfouz imagines a reversal of the traditional roles of courtship when a dead city is brought back to life in his *Nights*-inspired play *The Shaitan Preaches* (1979). In Mahfouz’s play, a young woman asks a handsome young man why he walks alone, and whether he would join her for a drink at the lake. Perceiving the astonishment of the visiting emissaries of the caliph, the ifrit explains that in this city it is the girl who flirts boldly with the boys, chooses her husband, and takes pleasure in her freedom.

109. *they envied me and wished me harm:* Once again, the specter of envy appears in the story cycle—mirroring the embedded story of “The Envied and the Envier” in “The Tale of the Second Dervish.”

110. *“I am the one you saved”:* Jinn were said to appear to humans most often in the form of serpents, dogs, cats, or human beings (Lane, vol. 1, p. 30, n. 21). The punishment of the sisters through a magical transformation by a grateful jinni mirrors the plot in “The Tale of the Second Old Man” in “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni.”

111. *When it opened, we went in and saw:* Mia Gerhardt classifies “The Tale of the Second Woman” among the love tales of the Baghdad period of the development of *One Thousand and One Nights*. These stories take love—and the suffering that usually accompanies it—very seriously, but they often take place in realistic settings with precise details evoking the markets, streets, mosques, and palaces of the legendary city. The plots rely on helpers like the old woman in this tale, rather than supernatural agency, to bring lovers together (pp. 130–32).

112. *My heart was his at once:* Love always strikes at first sight in the Baghdadian love tales, according to Gerhardt (p. 131).

113. *As we reached the silk sellers, the old woman said:* The role of the old woman in this story is ambiguous. Muhsin al-Musawi explains that in urban centers old women often mediated between young men and women, but in the *1001 Nights* stories, they often trap and deceive characters (p. 99). Some versions of this story depict the old woman as the most vile-looking creature, perhaps because of her role in the downfall of the young wife, but more likely as a function of prevalent negative stereotypes of older women in popular literature. As per his custom, Richard Burton expounds upon the prejudices of the original to create a lengthy description of an “ill-omened hag” in his translation (vol. 1, p. 174).

114. *“Slip of a thing”:* Poetry in Arab culture was considered the most appropriate form in which to describe the emotional impact of beauty, and this applied to both male and female subjects. Similar metaphors could be used in describing beautiful men and women—references to the moon and the night were common, as well as to certain flowers and precious gems.

115. *“only a kiss on her cheek”:* In an exchange inspired by this scene in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market,” the goblins peddling fruit ask for a lock of hair from “sweet-tooth Laura” in lieu of coin.

116. *“God has saved you from much worse”:* Another version of this story (in the Wortley Montagu manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights*) reverses the genders in the tale. In “Harun al-Rashid and the Youth Manjab,” an old woman takes a young jewelry merchant named Manjab to meet a beautiful young woman. When he falls madly in love with her, she agrees to marry him on the condition that if he betrays her, he will receive a gruesome punishment. A Bedouin woman later visits his shop and offers him an exquisite necklace in exchange for a kiss on the cheek. Overwhelmed by her beauty, he makes love to her, but later he discovers that she is his wife’s maid in disguise. His wife will demand her piece of flesh in return for his betrayal.

117. *punishment of those who break the vow”:* In this scene, the husband and wife play out the violence of King Shahriyar and his wife in the opening tale of the *Nights*. If the tales of Shahrazad are meant to enlighten the king regarding the taking of innocent life in a misplaced rage against women, this story would seem to move that argument forward. While not entirely innocent, the keeper is clearly a character worthy of the king’s sympathy and might pose questions in his mind regarding the wisdom of continuing his murderous campaign.

118. *But my sides remained disfigured by the blows:* In the story of “Harun al-Rashid and the Youth Manjab,” the unfaithful husband receives one thousand lashes on his right side and one thousand lashes on his left and is thrown into a garbage heap (although his wife had also threatened to have his tongue and hands cut off and his eye plucked from its socket). He is left

with disfiguring scars that spark the curiosity of Harun al-Rashid when he visits the man’s house late one night and sees him rip his clothes as a slave girl sings.

119. *I went to look for my husband’s house:* The destruction of this home, once identified as “the house of joy,” is deeply symbolic and clearly roots this domestic tragedy in the specific geography of Baghdad rather than the strange kingdoms and uncanny underground caverns where the misfortunes of the dervishes play out.

120. *“She gave me a lock of hair”:* This method of invoking a jinni through magic also appears in “The Envier and the Envied.” The jinni lives beyond Mount Qaf, essentially beyond the edge of the known world.

121. *“Now if you wish me to release them, I will do it gladly”:* The jinni is grateful to the owner for saving her life, but, in this situation, she is most responsive to the authority of the caliph. In other translations, she addresses him as the Commander of the Faithful and clearly places herself among the believing jinn who respect his religious authority. In “The Tale of Abdallah Ibn Fadil and His Brothers”—a version of “The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner,” in which the gender of the characters is reversed—the caliph orders Abdallah to stop flogging the dogs, and when the female jinni shows up to punish him for failing to follow her instructions, he shows her the written order of the caliph. When her jinni father explains that the caliph, as the vicar of God, has power even over them, she must relent and lift the spell on Abdallah’s two brothers.

122. *He married the owner:* Mia Gerhardt argues that this ending adds a fairy-tale element to a frame tale that is more realist in nature (pp. 311–12). This simple domestic resolution to stories imbued with intense passions and violent suffering appears discordant to today’s reader. Despite the women’s success in establishing their own language and their own household, the narrator seems to suggest that all the characters must firmly enter the social order through marriage to make themselves whole again. This might be an effective way to understand the passage of the dervishes from the uncanny margins to the security of an ordered urban realm again, but it does little to redress the injustices suffered by the keeper and her sister.

123. *And he married the keeper:* In the tale of “Harun al-Rashid and the Youth Manjab,” which retells the keeper’s tale with the genders switched, the man who has been tortured by his wife is also reconciled with her after Jaafar discovers that this mysterious woman is his sister.

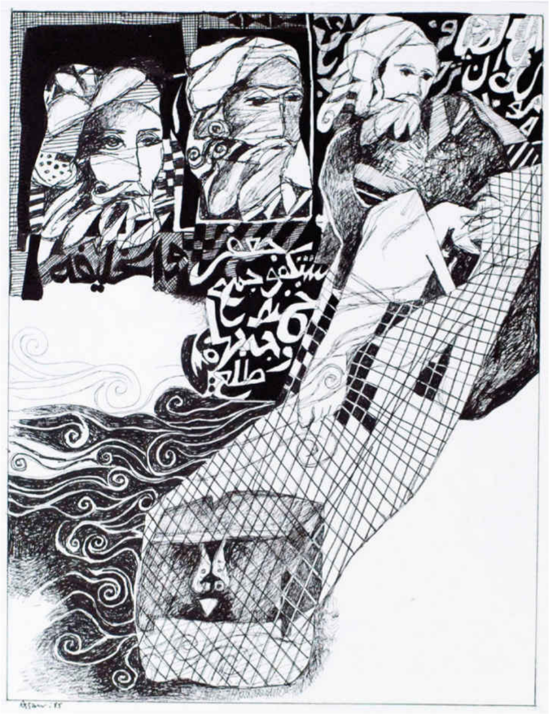
124. *the caliph took as his own bride the buyer:* The women of the house refuse to be married off in the retelling of this tale by Hanan al-Shaykh: “We plead with you, Oh Commander of the Faithful, to forgive us. We are unable to obey your good wishes, for we regard men as a deadly disease” (p. 189).

125. *how the caliph had been just and wise:* The intervention of Harun al-Rashid is crucial to the resolution of these stories. Only he as Commander of the Faithful has the authority to bring to an end the strange journeys of these characters through labyrinths of unspeakable passion and pain. The story thus presents Harun in his idealized guise—seeking truth and wielding authority justly while remaining accessible to those people who seek help and guidance.

THE STORY OF THE THREE APPLES

"The Story of the Three Apples" is one of a series of crime stories that were incorporated into One Thousand and One Nights *as it grew to encompass a wide variety of genres offering astonishing narratives to its audience. The story unfolds in a surprisingly modern fashion: The discovery of the body of a young woman generates a series of tales that slowly reveal the sequence of events that led to her murder. As each layer of the story is shared, accompanied by threats to punish both the crime and the incompetence of the investigator, the suspense builds. The clever construction of this tale explains why Peter Caracciolo argues that it was a significant influence on the creation of the first modern detective novel in English,* The Moonstone, *published by Wilkie Collins in 1868.*

The tale is sparked by the Abbasid caliph's encounter with a poor fisherman in medieval Baghdad and is framed by the caliph's fear that he will be held responsible for crimes committed under his rule. The suspense of the story is intensified by the caliph's demand that his vizier Jaafar find the murderer within three days or face execution. The contrast between the rash caliph and the vacillating vizier structures the investigation that follows, and the narrative is given added poignancy when the audience is aware that the real Harun al-Rashid suddenly turned on his trusted vizier, Jaafar al-Barmaki, in 803 CE and ordered him to be executed and his head displayed for public viewing. The horror of the murder of the young woman *is thus compounded by the threatening behavior of the caliph, whose decisions seem dangerously arbitrary.*



A chest caught in a fisherman's net brings a horrific crime to the attention of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi, 1985; printed with the permission of the artist.

Situated in the original sequence of stories of Shahrazad, this tale of the violent murder of a young wife speaks immediately to the tensions introduced in the frame narrative of the Nights. *The violent jealousy of the woman's husband dramatizes for the listening Shahriyar his own brutality, and the young man's repentance demonstrates the way forward if Shahrazad's story could only spark some sense of guilt in the king for his murderous campaign against the women of his kingdom. The behavior of Harun al-Rashid adds another layer to this effort to subtly turn Shahriyar's mind toward a model of just rule. If the vizier is saved by a lucky clue at the last minute, the listener might also realize that the caliph's demands upon him were dangerously unreasonable to begin with. Roger Allen thus argues that this story can be read as part of the genre of "mirrors for princes," as it provides a demonstration of the importance of wise and considered decisions in the practice of good governance.*

ONE DAY THE caliph said to Jaafar, his vizier, “Let us go into the city,[1] hear the news, and ask the people what they think of those in charge. I will dismiss the men they moan about and promote the ones they praise.”

Jaafar agreed, and when night fell, they went into the city with Masrur,[2] the servant, and walked about the streets and markets. As they turned into an alley, an old man appeared, a basket on his head and a staff in his hand, and the caliph said to Jaafar, “This is a man in need.”

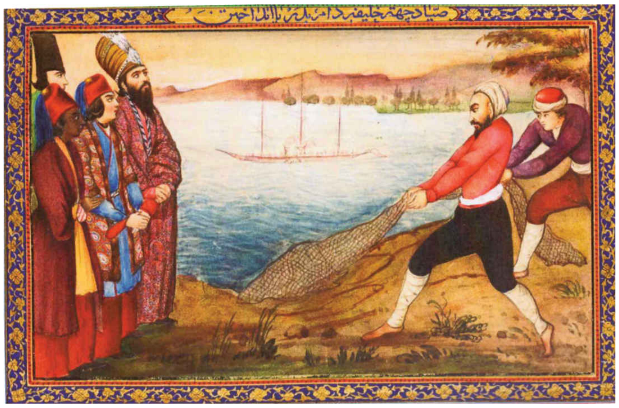
Then the caliph asked the old man, “What is your trade?”

“I am a fisherman with a family to maintain, but today I have caught nothing to keep hunger at bay. I hate myself and wish that I was dead.”

“Fisherman,” said the caliph, “will you go back with us to the Tigris, stand at the riverbank, and cast the net on my luck? Whatever you catch I will buy for a hundred dinars.”

The fisherman, happier, said yes.

Together they went to the Tigris.[3] He cast his net and waited, and when he drew the rope and hauled it up, he found inside the net a heavy chest, locked. The caliph gave him a hundred dinars and sent him on his way, and Masrur carried the chest to the palace.



The fisherman hauled up his net and found a heavy chest inside. Illustration from the manuscript of the 1843 Persian translation of One Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by Sani' al-Molk* *and his studio, and now in the library of the Golestan Palace in Tehran. Courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

When they broke it open,[4] they found inside a basket of red wool, and inside the basket was a stretch of carpet and, beneath it, a shawl folded in four, and, beneath it, a young woman like pure silver,[5] killed and cut in pieces …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

When they saw the girl in nineteen pieces, the caliph looked at her and tears ran down his cheeks. He turned to Jaafar and said, “Dog of viziers![6] Murders in my city and bodies in the river! I will bear the blame on Judgment Day. I must avenge this girl and put her killer to the worst of deaths. If you fail to find him, I will have you hanged with forty of your cousins.”

To the caliph in his rage, Jaafar said, “Grant me three days.”

“I grant them,” said the caliph.

Jaafar went into the city with unhappy thoughts, not knowing what to do.

“How will I ever find who killed the girl,” he thought, “and take him to the caliph? If I bring him a prisoner, his death will weigh on me. I am lost.”

He kept to his house for two days,[7] and on the third at noon, the caliph sent for him. And when Jaafar appeared, the caliph said, “Where is the murderer?”

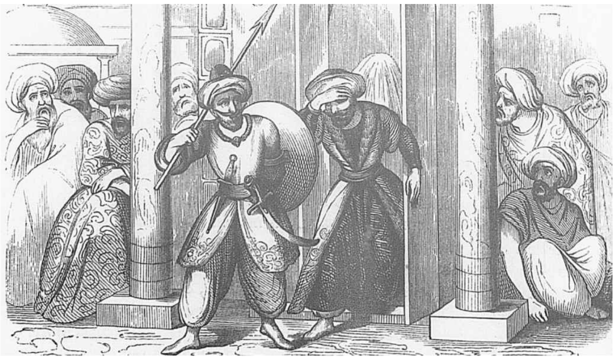


Illustration from Les Mille et une Nuits: Contes Arabes, *translated by Antoine Galland (1840).*

"Commander of the Faithful," said Jaafar, "I cannot ask the dead."

The caliph, furious, gave a shout and ordered that he be hanged in front of the palace, and that a crier cry throughout Baghdad: "Come out to see Jaafar al-Barmaki hanged[8] outside the palace with his cousins!"

The wali and his officers came out,[9] and Jaafar and the Barmakis were brought and made to stand under the gallows. As they watched a certain window in the palace for the handkerchief (this was the signal for the execution), and as the people wept for Jaafar and his kin, a young man in clean clothes appeared,[10] moon face and dusky eyes, lily brow and rosy cheek and downy chin, and a mole like a disc of amber. He came slicing through the crowd until he stood before Jaafar, kissed his hands, and cried, "Spare this prince of ministers, this refuge of the poor! Hang me in his place for the girl's murder. I am the one who killed her."

Jaafar, hearing this confession, was glad to be delivered but sorry for the boy. As they spoke, an ancient man came pressing through the crowd to Jaafar.

"Vizier!" he said. "Do not believe this boy. None killed the girl but I! Avenge her death with mine or I will call you to account before Almighty God."

"Vizier!" the young man said. "None murdered her but I."

"Son," said the old man, "I have grown old and seen enough of life. You are still young: Let me give my life for you. I killed her, now hurry up and hang me. No life is left in me now she is gone."

Jaafar was amazed at what he heard. He took both men, the young and old, with him to see the caliph, kissed the earth before him seven times, and said, "Commander of the Faithful, I have brought you the murderer.

This young man says he killed the girl, the old man says the same. Here they both are before you.”

The caliph looked at them and said, “Which of you killed the girl and threw her in the river?”

“It was me,” said the young man.

And the old man, “It was I.”

Then the caliph said to Jaafar, “Hang them both.”[11]

But Jaafar said, “If only one man killed her, it is wrong to hang the other.”

“By He who raised the sky,” said the young man, “I am the one who killed her.”

And he described how he had done it (basket, carpet, shawl).

“Four days ago,” he said, “I threw her in the river. In the name of God and the last day, do not let me live on after her.”

The caliph was amazed and said, “Why did you kill her, and why have you come forward on your own?”

“Commander of the Faithful,” said the young man, “my story with this girl is such that if you were to write it with a needle in the corner of the eye,[12] it would be a warning to the wise.”

“Tell us your story,” said the caliph.

And the young man spoke …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Commander of the Faithful, the murdered woman was my wife, the mother of my children, and my cousin (this old man is her father and my uncle). I married her when she was still a virgin, and in eleven years we were blessed with three sons. She loved and served me, and I found no fault with her[13] and loved her dearly.

Now on the first day of this month, she became ill, badly ill, then she got worse, but I took care of her and slowly, at month's end, her health returned.

One day, before going to the bath, she said to me, "I have a craving I want you to satisfy."

"If it were a thousand cravings," I said, "I will do it."

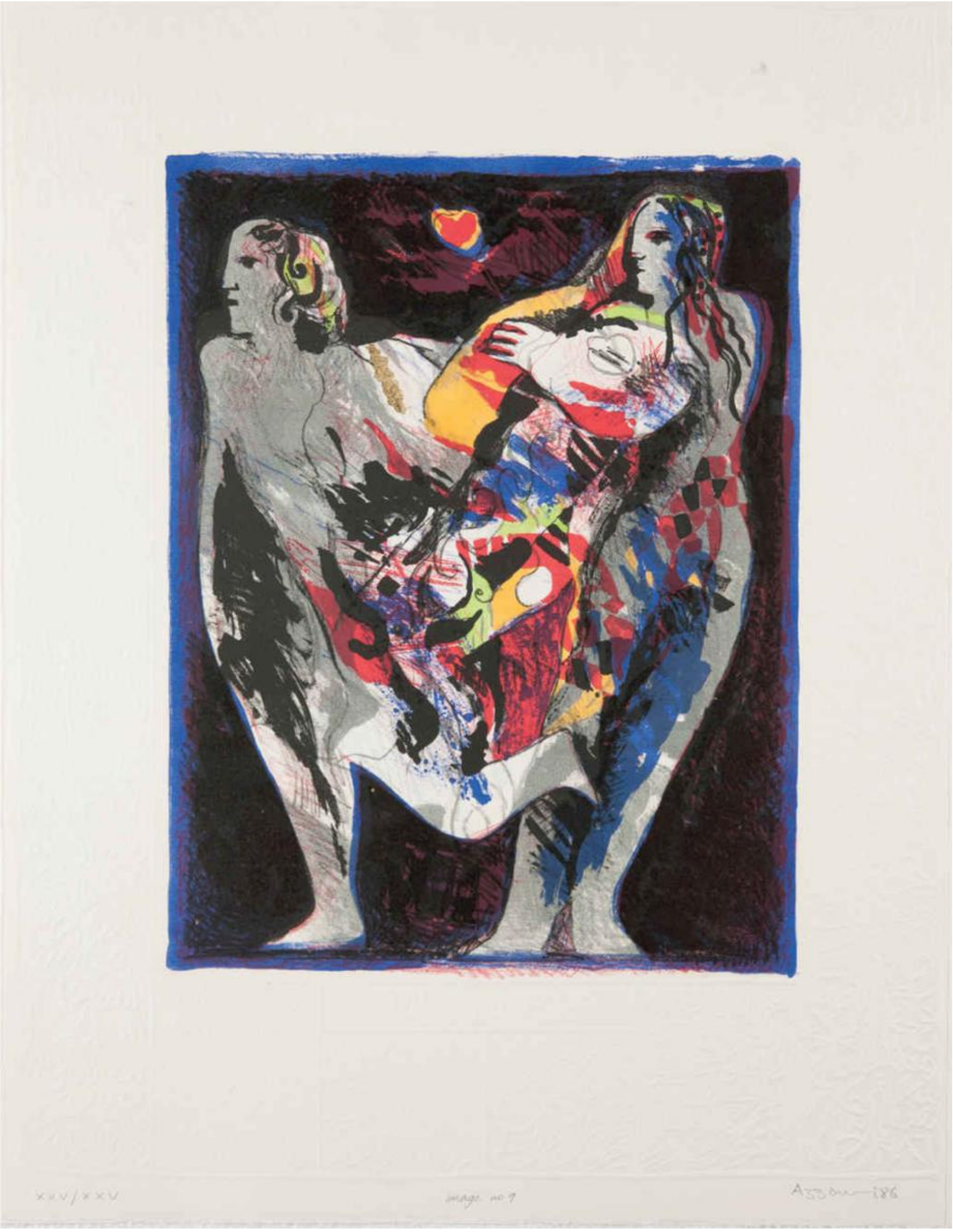
"I crave an apple,"[14] she said. "If I could only smell and take a bite of one, I would die happy."

"It will be done," I said.

I searched your city but could find in it no apples, though I would have bought a single one for a dinar. Unable to give her what she craved, I went home to my wife, who grew weaker that night.

When morning came, I made the rounds of all the orchards, one by one, and found no apples there. Then I met a gardener who said, "My boy, apples are rare and only found in Basra,[15] where the royal gardener keeps them for the caliph."

I went home and, moved by love, prepared myself and traveled fifteen days and nights, then returned to my wife with three apples I had bought for three dinars from the gardener in Basra.



The Three Apples. *Print by Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.*

But when I handed them to her, she showed no pleasure and put them aside. Then she grew weaker, my worry keener, and her fever went on for ten days.

One day, as I sat in my shop trading cloth, I saw a slave pass by, tall as a reed and broad as a bench. He entered the market, and in his hand was one of the three apples I had traveled half a month to buy.

I called after him and said, “Where did you get this apple?”

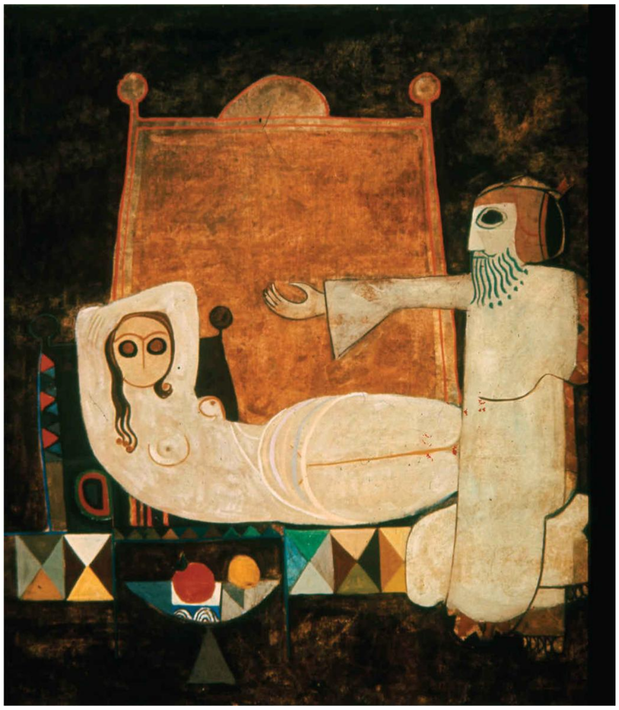
“From my lover,” he said. “Today I went to see her and found her lying ill with three apples beside her, and she told me that her cuckold of a husband had traveled half a month to get them. I ate and drank with her and took one of the apples.”

When I heard these words, Commander of the Faithful, the world went dark before my eyes, and I locked up my shop and went home, out of my mind with grief and fury.[16] And when I looked for the apples and found only two, I said to my wife, “Where is the other apple?”

She looked up and said, “I do not know.”

Certain that the slave had told the truth, I took a sharp knife and, without a word, came up behind her, knelt across her chest and stabbed her throat, cut off her head, and, working fast, I laid her in a basket and wrapped her in a shawl, screened it with a carpet, and sewed up the basket, which I locked inside a chest, and took it to the Tigris on my head and threw it in.

Commander of the Faithful, hang me quickly for her death, or God will hold you to account on Judgment Day, for when I threw her in the river and went home, I found my eldest boy in tears. I asked him what was wrong, and he said, “Father, this morning I stole one of the apples that were at Mother’s bedside and went down to the market to play with my brothers, then a tall slave came by and took it from my hand. And I said to him, ‘My father traveled half a month to get this apple for my mother who is ill. Do not make trouble for me.’ But he ignored me, and when I begged him a second and a third time, he slapped me and ran off with it. In my fear, I hid outside the city with my brothers until dark, and I am still afraid for Mother. Please say nothing, Father, or she will get sicker.”



The offer of an apple. From the Tales of One Thousand and One Nights, *by Dia al-Azzawi, 1968. Printed with the permission of the artist.*

When I heard my son and saw him cry, I knew that I was wrong to kill my wife and that the slave had lied. And I wept with my boy, and when this old man (my uncle and her father) came, I told him what had happened, and he sat weeping with me, and we wept without rest until midnight. For three days we mourned, grieving her wrongful death, all because of that slave.

That is the story of the murdered girl. Now I beg you, on your ancestors, to kill me. There is no life in me now she is dead …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The caliph was amazed and said, “I will hang none but the slave.”[17]

And to Jaafar he said, “Go to the city and bring me the slave, or you will die instead.”

Jaafar left in tears and thought, “My death is near[18] (the jar is only lucky once) and there is no escape, but He who saved me once may yet help me again. I will stay home for three days and let God do his work.”

He kept to his house, and at noon on the third day, he gave up hope. He called the judges and the witnesses and made his will, sent for his children and in tears said good-bye.

Soon a messenger came from the caliph and said, “He is in a rage and swears to hang you before night.”

Jaafar wept, and all the slaves and members of his house wept with him, then his youngest daughter, whom he loved more than the others, came up to him. He held her to his heart[19] and, weeping at their parting, kissed her, when he felt a round thing in her dress and said, “My girl, what is that in your pocket?”

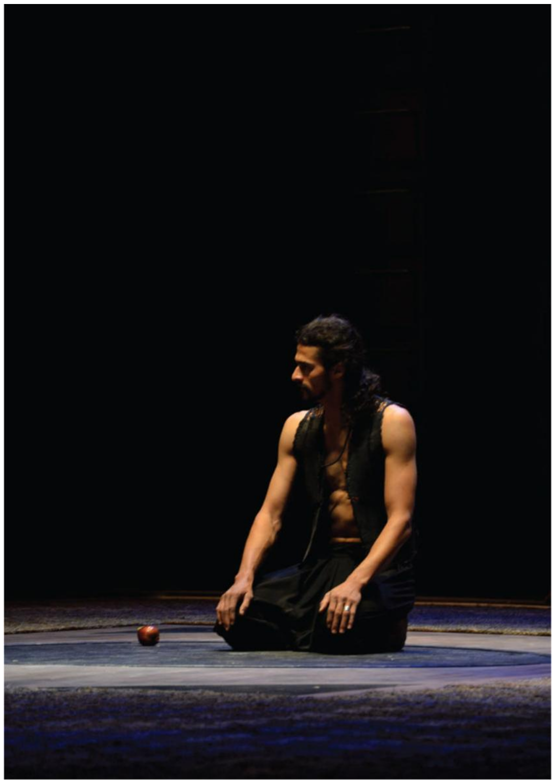
“It is an apple,” she said, “with the name of our caliph written on it. Reyhan our slave brought it four days ago, but he would not let me have it until I gave him two gold coins.”

At the mention of the apple and the slave, Jaafar gave a cry of joy,[20] fished the apple from his daughter’s pocket, and said, “Soon I will be safe!”

Then he called the slave before him and said, “Where did you get this apple?”

“A lie may save you once,” said Reyhan, “but the truth is safer. I did not steal this apple from your palace, nor from the palace of the caliph, nor from his gardens. Four days ago, as I was walking in the city, I saw some children playing, and when one of them dropped this apple, I snatched it from him with a slap, and he cried and said to me, ‘This apple is my mother’s. She told my father how she longed for one, so he traveled half a month to Basra and brought back three apples for her, and I took one to play with. Give it back!’ But I would not. Instead, I brought it here and sold it to my little lady for two coins. That is the story of the apple.”

Jaafar marveled that the murder of the girl and all the misery that followed had its origin in one of his own slaves. Taking Reyhan by the hand, Jaafar led him to the caliph and told him the whole story, first to last, and the caliph laughed until he fell on his back.[21]



The missing apple. Rachid Ed Adouani in Tim Supple's stage adaptation of One Thousand and One Nights *at the Luminato Festival in Toronto, 2011. Photo by Sophie Austin.*

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1. *"Let us go into the city":* This story employs a common plot motif in the *Nights* in which Caliph Harun al-Rashid walks the streets of his capital, accompanied by his vizier Jaafar, to learn about the condition of his people and rectify any problems he might encounter. Several stories in later recensions of the *Nights* focus on the caliph's restless need for distraction and entertainment, but this opening emphasizes his concern for the well-being of his subjects.

2. *they went into the city with Masrur:* Harun al-Rashid's executioner, Masrur, is another frequent companion during his explorations of Baghdad. Charlotte Brontë references this character in one of her many allusions to the *Nights* in *Jane Eyre*, in which Rochester is figured as the caliph and Mesrour is the name of his horse.

3. *Together they went to the Tigris:* The Tigris River is a significant element in the geography of Baghdad in the *Nights*. The traveler Ibn Battuta presents the bridges over the Tigris as an important part of the street life of Baghdad, offering places where people could sit to watch the people of the city pass by. The caliph meets the protagonist of "The Sleeper and the Waker" at a location like this one, and Hanna Diyab also uses a river location to begin his story, "The Night

Adventures of Harun al-Rashid.” The distinctive cityscape of Baghdad and the glories of Harun al-Rashid’s rule provide the setting for Alfred Tennyson’s poem “Recollections of the Arabian Nights”:

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow’d back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat’s shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid….

4. *When they broke it open:* The core stories of the *1001 Nights* feature a number of significant moments when a container is opened to reveal contents that will prove dangerous to the character who has found them. This moment parallels the box containing the jinni’s captive bride in the frame tale, as well as the jinni in the bottle in “The Fisherman and the Jinni.” David Pinault argues that the careful accumulation of detail as the various layers within the chest are slowly removed is an example of “dramatic visualization”—a device used at selective moments in the *One Thousand and One Nights* to heighten tension about the revelation to come (p. 88).

5. *like pure silver:* Yasmine Seale notes that “silver” is commonly used to describe brightness and beauty. (It also appears in the description of the young merchant in “The Story of Dalila the Crafty.”)

6. *“Dog of viziers!”:* The shocking sight of the murdered girl leads to an explosion of emotion from the caliph, who quickly becomes concerned about his own responsibility for a crime committed under his rule.

7. *He kept to his house for two days:* In this story, Jaafar acts as a foil to the impulsive caliph, but his passivity in the face of the mission assigned to him is astonishing. Mia Gerhardt suggests that he is “the opposite of a detective” in this crime story—simply waiting with resignation for events to take their course (p. 170). As a historical figure, Jaafar al-Barmaki was a very capable administrator and politician, but he is presented as weak and ineffectual in this story.

8. *“Come out to see Jaafar al-Barmaki hanged”:* For readers and listeners familiar with the historical figure of Jaafar al-Barmaki, the caliph’s threat would have evoked memories of Harun al-Rashid’s order to execute his vizier and imprison members of the Barmakid family in 803. According to the ninth-century historian al-Tabari, when the executioner Masrur finally beheaded Jaafar, Harun ordered the severed head impaled on Baghdad’s Middle Bridge for the public to view (Pinault, p. 84). Historians have speculated about the reasons for the caliph’s decision to act against the powerful Barmakid family, but, regardless of the historical circumstances, the audience for this story would have been struck by Jaafar’s sudden reversal of fortune at the hands of a capricious caliph.

9. *The wali and his officers came out:* The term *wali* refers to the governor of a province in this context.

10. *a young man in clean clothes appeared:* The young husband is described with recourse to Arabic formulas evoking beauty. The narrator creates a character with whom the audience might well identify—making the revelation of his grisly crime even more astonishing.

11. *"Hang them both":* The caliph gives additional evidence of his impulsiveness in an example that should lead to questions about what kind of behavior a ruler truly committed to justice should demonstrate. Jaafar's response makes this a teaching moment in the spirit of a "Mirror for Princes" primer. It is generally the case in stories featuring these two characters that the vizier offers a check on the rash caliph, as he attempts to do in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad."

12. *"if you were to write it with a needle in the corner of the eye":* This is a standard formula for expressing astonishment in the *Nights*, and it appears in "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" and "The Enchanted Prince."

13. *"I found no fault with her":* The narrator emphasizes the innocence and admirability of the young woman—raising questions about why her loving husband could have wanted to hurt her.

14. *"I crave an apple":* The apple symbolizes a rare delight in this story, but in "The Story of Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," added to the *Nights* by Hanna Diyab and Antoine Galland, the apple can cure all diseases, even if the afflicted person could only smell it.

15. *only found in Basra:* References to Basra, a flourishing port during the glory years of the Abbasid Empire, are often present in *Nights* stories that are situated in Baghdad. Basra is the key port of departure in the voyages of Sinbad.

16. *out of my mind with grief and fury:* The young husband's reaction to the implication of infidelity parallels the behavior of Shahriyar in the opening story of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. This story could be read as part of Shahrazad's efforts to awaken her vengeful husband to his own guilt in the deaths of so many innocent women, and to help him understand his own responsibility to make more considered judgments of guilt and innocence rather than acting rashly out of misplaced rage and jealousy.

17. *"I will hang none but the slave":* In another impulsive decision, apparently determined by his sympathetic response to a young husband who also has problems managing his emotions, the caliph decides not to punish the young man.

18. *"My death is near":* Once more, Jaafar demonstrates his fatalistic nature, relying on God's will to determine his fate, and this resonates with the lessons that were allegedly drawn from the death of the real Jaafar al-Barmaki. Pinault notes that, after the brutal execution of Jaafar, the following warning was inscribed on the gate of an aristocrat's castle in Khurasan: "The vicissitudes of Time have been poured out upon the wretched sons of Barmak. In their affair is a warning for us, so let the dweller who holds this palace take warning!" (p. 83)

19. *He held her to his heart:* In an unusual plot device for a Harun tale in the *Nights*, Jaafar is presented as a family man who dotes upon his young daughter and whose family is in despair at

the prospect of losing him. This only increases the contrast between the vizier and the caliph that he serves, and heightens sympathy for the vizier doomed to suffer for the impulsive decisions of Harun.

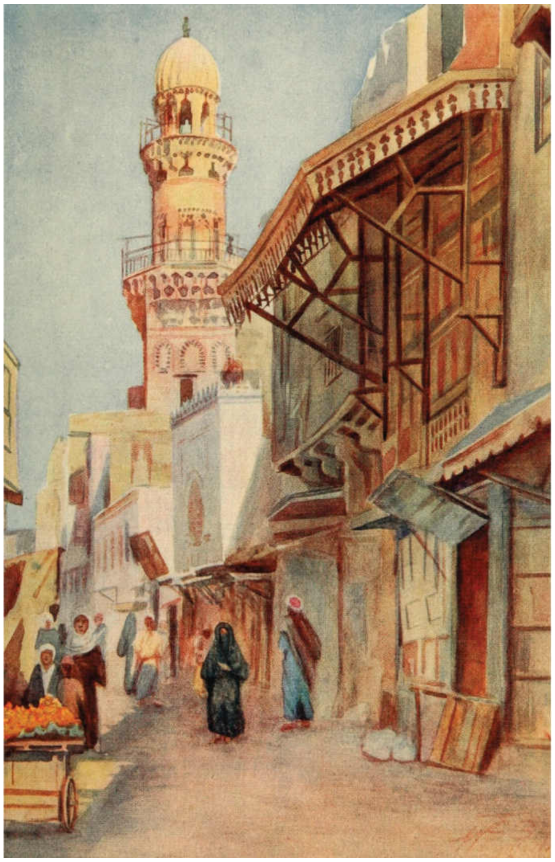
20. *Jaafar gave a cry of joy:* In his analysis of this story, Pinault has described this as a well-constructed example of anagnorisis, or recognition of identity. He compares this moment to the recognition scene in Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris* (p. 97).

21. *"the caliph laughed until he fell on his back:"* The response of the characters to the revelation of the source of this crime is perhaps not what one would expect from modern crime story, although it does match the reaction of the jinni at the end of "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni." Perhaps this response lightens the mood for Shariyar, who is presumed to be listening to Shahrazad as she delivers this tale. Certainly it humanizes the caliph, who has shown himself to be a rather threatening figure in earlier scenes. His remarkable shift in mood fits the character of the fictional Harun of *One Thousand and One Nights*, where the potential for despotic rule is moderated by surprising turns of events or the pacifying effects of storytelling. In the manuscript from which this version of the "Three Apples" comes, the story continues as Jaafar offers to tell Harun another story as amazing as the complicated tale of the murdered woman. The caliph accepts and promises that if it is indeed more amazing than the "Tale of the Three Apples," he will pardon Jaafar's slave for his role in the crime.

THE STORY OF DALILA THE CRAFTY

The story of “Dalila the Crafty” is set in Baghdad and graced with an appearance by Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid, but its intricate plot is grounded in a realistic setting that reflects the quotidian life of merchants and shopkeepers in the crowded city of Cairo. Late-medieval Cairo was a sprawling city of perhaps a quarter of a million people, with a mass of intricately twisting streets connecting a series of commercial and residential quarters. The ruses of Dalila and her daughter Zaynab reveal to the reader a cross-section of the varied social types in the city and a glimpse of structures of authority. The appeal of the story is the cleverness apparent in Dalila’s ability to string a long series of tricks together, taking more and more risks and targeting people higher up the social order as she goes. The action takes the reader into the streets and the shops of the city, revealing the power of the crowd and the incompetence of the police.

This is one of a series of stories that appear to have been added to the One Thousand and One Nights *during the Egyptian period of its development from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. It can be grouped with other “rogue stories” that feature clever criminals who commit daring thefts or play rude practical jokes, often on figures of authority. These tales reflect the “celebration of artfulness or trickiness” that historian Robert Irwin argues is one of the most striking features of medieval Arab culture. Unlike the brigands who occasionally appear to menace travelers outside the safety of the city in the* Nights, *these thieves* *and tricksters are distinctly urban characters who are regarded with admiration rather than fear. They survive through their wits rather than through brute violence, and they provide a model of resourcefulness that was much admired among popular audiences for the tales in Cairo.*



Stories of tricksters like Dalila the Crafty are believed to have been added to the One Thousand and One Nights *during the collection's development in Mamluk Cairo. Illustration of Cairo by W.S.S. Tyrwhitt from* Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus *(1912).*

A confidence trickster named Dalila was already famous in Abbasid Baghdad and was referenced in a tenth-century chronicle by al-Mas'udi. Historians have established the existence in Baghdad, as early as the tenth century, of well-organized criminal gangs offering protection for a price, and other notorious criminals mentioned in the tale of Dalila were part of this criminal underclass. Ahmad al-Danaf (translated here by Yasmine Seale as Ahmad the Plague) was a well-known criminal in this period and would go on to play the role of a folk hero in his own popular romance as a kind of Arab Robin Hood. The idea that infamous criminals like Ahmad the

Plague and Calamity Hasan would be appointed captains of the watch in Baghdad is not as far-fetched as it would seem. A tenth-century source indicates that it was common for retired thieves to join the police force, since they were likely to know who committed the crimes and where they could be found. The possibility for corruption, however, was well recognized (Irwin, Arabian Nights: A Companion, *pp. 141–45).*

Tales of rogues and tricksters were popular among storytellers' audiences in the streets and coffeehouses of Cairo. Characters from this tale of Dalila and Zaynab, as well as the related tales of "Mercury 'Ali" and "Aladdin of the Beautiful Moles," appeared in one of the most popular epics told by professional storytellers in Egypt during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—"The Tale of 'Ali al-Zaybaq." Other stories from the One Thousand and One Nights *confirm the interest of audiences in feats of criminals and exposés of the incompetence and corruption of the police. Several of these tales feature arbitrary arrests, beatings, and torture at the hands of police. Against this backdrop, the stories of rogues and clever thieves like Dalila and Zaynab have some of the appeal of the Spanish picaresque tales of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, featuring shady characters living by their wits in a corrupt society (Gerhardt, p. 183).*

The presence of women within the criminal gangs of medieval Baghdad and Cairo is a historical fact, but their presence in the Nights *raises questions about gendered discourses within the stories. The essential contest between men and women that runs through the story collection, beginning with its opening tale, is sometimes played out explicitly in these tales of clever rogues. In one tale, a female trickster targets a particular shopkeeper because he posts a sign declaring that "the wiles of men surpass the wiles of women." In translating the story of Dalila and Zaynab, Yasmine Seale thought carefully about how to translate the Arabic word* makr*—which may mean deceit, trick, or craft—in ways that did not automatically accept the tendency to praise men for their skill while condemning women for their "wiles." This translation shows that Dalila and her daughter Zaynab may rightly take their place with the many other female protagonists in the* Arabian Nights *who confidently display their skill and intelligence to ensure their own survival.*

THEY SAY, *my happy king*, that there lived in the time of Harun al-Rashid a man named Ahmad the Plague and another called Calamity Hasan,[1] masters of guile and ruse with rare deeds to their name—so rare that the caliph rewarded them with robes of honor and made them watchmen of the city, Ahmad of the right side and Hasan of the left. To each he appointed a salary of a thousand dinars a month and forty men to do their bidding, and to Ahmad was also entrusted the watch of the land outside the walls.

So it was that Ahmad and Hasan, attended by the chief of police, went out into the city, each trailed by forty men on horseback and led by the crier, who cried, “By order of the caliph, there is no watchman in Baghdad but Ahmad the Plague on the right side and Calamity Hasan on the left! They are to be heard and obeyed.”[2]

Now there was in the city an old woman called Dalila the Crafty, who had a daughter called Zaynab the Sly. When they heard the crier’s call, Zaynab said to her mother, “Look at that man, Ahmad the Plague. He came here as a fugitive from Cairo and bamboozled all Baghdad until he won the caliph’s confidence. Now there he is, watchman of the right side, while that scrag of a man Calamity Hasan is watchman of the left. A table is spread for them noon and night,[3] and each gets a thousand dinars a month, while we sit in this house unsung, with nothing to our name and no respect.”

Dalila’s husband, see, had been watchman of Baghdad with a monthly wage of a thousand dinars, but he died leaving two daughters, one married with a son named Ahmad the Foundling, and the other, Zaynab, unmarried.

Dalila was a master of ruses and rackets. She could lure a snake from its lair and the devil himself might have learned his tricks from her. Her father had been keeper of the caliph’s carrier pigeons: For a thousand dinars a month, he trained the birds to carry notes and letters, and each was dearer to the caliph than one of his own sons.

Now Zaynab said, “Go, Mother, play some trick that will make our name in Baghdad[4] and win us back our father’s wage.”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Dalila said, “I swear on your life, my girl, to make more mischief in Baghdad than ever made by Ahmad the Plague or Calamity Hasan.”

Then she rose and threw a veil over her face, and wrapped herself in clothes such as poor Sufis wear,[5] a robe that reached her ankles and a gown of white wool with a broad belt. She took a pitcher, filled it to the neck with water, and placed three dinars in the mouth, which she stopped with a tuft of palm fibers. Then she slung around her neck a string of beads heavy as a load of firewood, and, taking in her hand a flag of red and yellow rags, she went out crying, “Allah! Allah!” and her tongue sang God’s praises, while her heart ran wild in the circus of vices.

Wandering the streets, she searched her mind for a trick she could play on the town, until she came to an alley swept and scrubbed and marble-flagged where she saw a vaulted doorway with an alabaster lintel and a Maghrebi porter at the door.

Now this house belonged to the caliph’s chief of police, a man with land and a large income, known as Hassan Road-Hazard[6] because he liked to strike before he spoke. He was married to a beautiful woman named Khatun, whom he loved and who had made him swear, on the night that she let him enter her, that he would take no other wife but her, nor ever sleep in the houses of others.

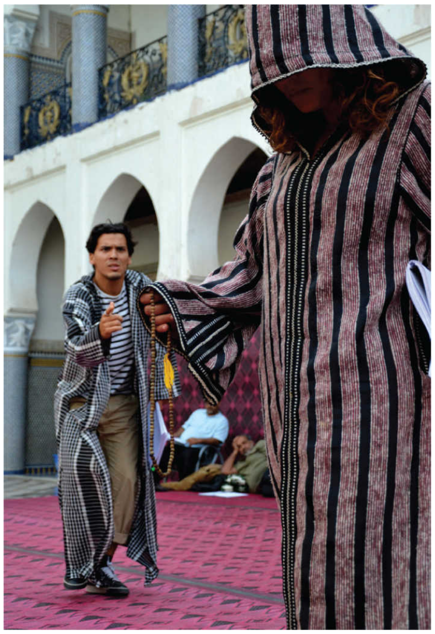
So things went on until one day, Hassan went to the diwan and saw that each official had with him a son or two. When he entered the baths and looked at his face in the mirror, he saw that the white hairs in his beard had overlaid the black, and he said to himself, “Will He who took your father not bless you with a son?”

And he went in a rage to his wife.

“Good evening,” she said to him.

“Get out of my sight,” he replied. “Since the day I met you, I have seen nothing good.”

“How so?”



Dalila in disguise as a Sufi holy woman. Amal Omran and Tewfik Jallab in rehearsals in Fez for Supple’s adaptation of One Thousand *and* One Nights. *Photo by Sophie Austin.*

“On the night I married you,” he said, “you made me swear to take no other wife, but today I saw each official with a son and some with two, and I remembered death. I have been given no children, and men without sons die forgotten. That is the reason for my anger: You are barren.”

“God forgive you!” she said. “I have worn out the mortar pounding drugs and remedies to help fertility. I am not to blame. You must be the barren one: You are a flat-nosed mule and your sperm is watery and weak.”

“When I return from my journey,” he said, “I will take another wife.”

“My fate is with God!”

Then he walked out, and both regretted what they had said.

Now on the day Dalila passed, Khatun stood at the window, so covered in jewels she seemed a bride of gold. From the street, Dalila saw the costly things she wore and thought, “What could demonstrate more skill than to lure that woman from her husband’s house,[7] strip her of her jewels and clothes, and take the treasure home!”

And she stood under the windows of the house crying, “Allah! Allah!” until Khatun looked down and spotted the old woman, who seemed a canopy of light in her white clothes.

“Come out, friends of God!” Dalila cried, and every woman on the street looked out from behind her lattice screen and requested a blessing from the sheikha with the glowing face.

Khatun said to her servant, “Go down and kiss the hand of Sheikh Abu Ali, the porter, and tell him to let that sheikha come up and give her blessing.”

The maid went down, kissed the porter’s hand, and said, “My lady says to let that woman in.”

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The porter tried to kiss Dalila’s hand, but she stopped him and said, “Stay away, or my ablutions will be void. May God deliver you from servitude.”

Now the porter, who had not been paid in three months, was short of money and did not know how to recover his due from his master.

“Dear mother,” he said, “let me drink from your pitcher[8] and receive your blessing.”

She took the pitcher from her shoulder and whirled it about until the stopper flew out of its mouth and the three coins fell to the ground. The porter picked them up and thought, “This woman is a mystic:[9] She has divined my need and conjured these three coins out of the air for my relief.”

He offered to return them, but she said, “Take them away! I am one of those who have renounced the world. Use them in place of what is owed to you.”

“I thank God,” said the porter, “for your vision and your gift!”

Then the maid appeared, kissed Dalila’s hand, and took her up to her mistress. The lady, to Dalila, seemed a treasure chest whose seals had all been loosed. She welcomed the old woman, kissed her hand, and said, “I have called you up only for your advice.”

The lady set a meal before her, but Dalila said, “I eat nothing but the food of Paradise, and I break my fast only five days a year. But my child, I see that you are troubled. Tell me what the matter is.”

“You see,” said Khatun, “on our wedding night I made my husband swear that he would take no other wife. But when he saw that other men had children, he longed for them and called me barren, and I called him an impotent mule, so he left me in a rage and said that he would take another wife when he returned. Now I am afraid he will divorce me. He has land and a large salary, and if he has children with another, it will all be theirs.”

“My girl,” Dalila said, “do you not know the man called the Sheikh of Plenty? A person with debts has only to see him to find the debt paid, and any barren woman who visits him conceives.”[10]

“I have not left the house since I was married,” said Khatun, “not even to congratulate or to console.”

“I will take you,” said Dalila. “You will make a vow to him, and when your husband comes back and sleeps with you, you will bear him a child. Be it male or female, it will be a dervish of the Sheikh of Plenty.”

The young woman rose, adorned herself in gold and the finest clothes she had, and told her servant to watch over the house …

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Khatun went down to the porter, Abu Ali, who asked where she was going.

“To visit the Sheikh of Plenty,” she said.

“The sheikha you are going with,” he said, “is among the saints and full of holiness. She gave me three coins of red gold and guessed my need without my asking.”

The women left together.

“Inshallah,” said Dalila, “when you see the sheikh, your mind will be at ease, you will conceive, and your husband will never let you hear an angry word.”

Khatun said, “To the sheikh!”

But to herself Dalila said, “Where shall I strip her of her clothes in such a crowd?”

“My girl,” she said, “walk behind and keep me in your sight. This mother of yours is a woman of many burdens: All those who have a burden cast it on me and kiss my hand.”

Khatun trailed her at a distance until, preceded by the ring of anklets and the clink of braids, they reached the market. They arrived at the shop of a young merchant named Sidi Hasan, who was very handsome and had no hair on his face, and as the girl came near, he stole a look at her.

Dalila noted this[11] and said, “Sit here till I return.”

Khatun did as she was told and sat outside the shop of the young merchant, who cast her a glance that cost him a thousand sighs.

Dalila went inside and greeted him and said, “Are you not Sidi Hasan, son of the merchant Muhsin?”

“I am,” he said, “who told you my name?”

“Good people have sent me your way,” she said. “That girl you see is my daughter. Her father was a merchant who died and left her rich, and she is now of age, and you know what they say, ‘Marry off your daughter, not your son.’ She has never left the house until this day, but a sign I have received[12] and my own heart have counseled me to marry her to you. If you are poor, I will give you capital and buy another shop for you.”

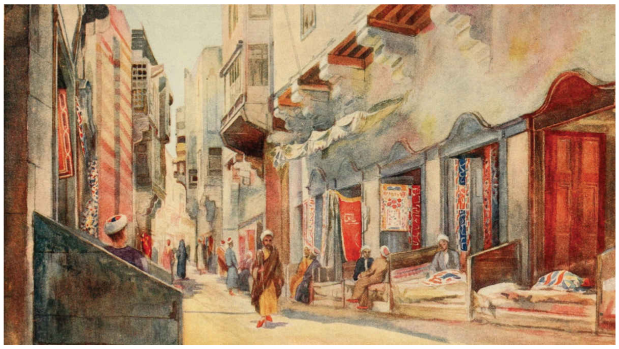
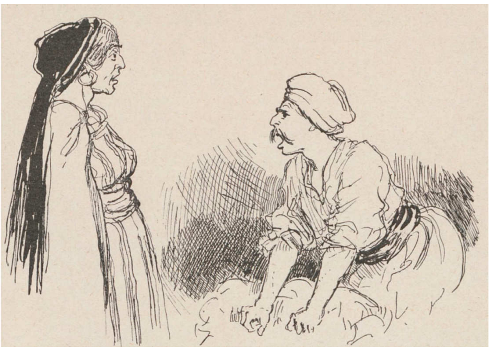


Illustration of Cairo fabric souq by W. S. S. Tyrwhitt from Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus *by D. S. Margoliouth (New York, 1912).*



Dalila makes a plea to share the home of the dyer. Illustration by Albert Robida, from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(Paris: Maurice Bauche, 1909).*

To himself, the merchant said, “I asked God only for a bride, but he has blessed me three times over, with coin and cloth and cunt.”

To Dalila, he said, “I will only marry a woman I have seen with my own eyes.”

“Follow me,” she said, “and you will see her unveiled.”

He rose and took with him a thousand dinars,[13] just in case …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

Dalila said to the young man, "Walk behind and keep your distance, but keep her in your sight."

And to herself, she said, "Where will you take the merchant while his shop is shut? Where will you deceive him and the girl?"

On she walked, the young bride at her heels, the merchant at the bride's, until they came to a dye shop. The craftsman there was called Hajj Muhammad, and like the colocasia seller's knife[14] he entered both the female and the male, and loved to eat both fig and pomegranate. At the ring of ankle chains, he raised his head and saw, behind the old woman, the girl and the boy.

Dalila came to sit beside him, greeted him, and asked, "Are you not the dyer, Hajj Muhammad?"

"I am," he said, "what do you want?"

"Good people have sent me your way," she said. "Now look at that beautiful girl. She is my daughter, and that hairless boy is my son. I brought them up myself and spent a fortune on them. Now my house is crumbling. I have shored it up with wooden beams, but the builder said to go and live some other place before it comes down on my head, and to return when he has made it safe. So here I am, come in search of somewhere else to stay. Guided your way by good people, I would like to lodge my daughter and my son with you."

To himself, the dyer said, "Butter has landed on your bread."

And to Dalila, he said, "I have a house with a courtyard and an upper floor, but not a room to spare: I need them for my guests."

"Just a month," she said, "two at most, until our house is mended. Do not turn away strangers. Let us share your home,[15] and should you ever want to lodge your guests with us, we would welcome them and eat with them and sleep beside them."

At last, he gave her the keys: a big one for the house, a crooked one for the courtyard, and a small one for the upper floor. Dalila took them and left the dyer's shop, followed by the girl and the young merchant, and walked on until she came to the alley where the dyer lived, and she found the door. She opened it, went in, and said to the girl, “This is the Sheikh of Plenty’s house. Now go upstairs, take off your veil, and wait for me.”

As for the boy, she took him into the courtyard and said, “Sit here and let me fetch my daughter.”

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

The young merchant sat in the courtyard while Dalila went upstairs to the girl, who said, “Let me see the Sheikh of Plenty now, before others arrive.”

“I worry,” said Dalila.

“Why?”

“My son,” Dalila said, “is a fool who cannot tell summer from winter and goes around naked. He is the sheikh’s assistant, and if he saw a lady like you come to visit him, he would tear off her earrings, slash her ears, and claw at her silken clothes. You had better remove your jewelry and robes and leave them with me while you make your visit.”

The girl gave all her finery to Dalila, who said, “I will lay them for you on the sheikh’s screen for good luck.”[16]

And she went out, leaving the young woman in her underwear, and hid the clothes and jewels under the stairs. Then she returned to the young merchant, who said impatiently, “Where is she?”

When Dalila only struck her breast, he said, “What is the matter?”

Gold earrings from Egypt or Syria, twelfth–thirteenth century. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

“The neighbors!” she replied. “They saw you come in with me and asked about you. I said you were a groom I had found for my daughter, so they envied me[17] and said to my girl, ‘Is your mother so tired of feeding you that she will marry you off to a leper?’ I had to promise her that I would let her see you naked.”

“God protect us from envy,” he said, and uncovered his arms, and she saw that they were clear as silver.

“Do not worry,” she said. “You will see her unveiled just as she will see you bare.”

“Let her come and look at me,” he said.

Then he removed his sable fur, his belt and dagger, all his clothes, and lay down in his undershirt, a thousand dinars in his purse.

“Let me keep that purse for you,” Dalila said. She took all these things, went to collect the young bride’s clothes and jewels, and, shouldering the lot, she locked the gate behind her and walked off …

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

She deposited her loot with a perfumer she knew[18] and returned to the dyer, who was waiting.

“I hope the house is to your liking,” he said.

“It is a blessing,” she said. “Now I was going to find porters to carry our things there, but my children have requested meat and bread. Would you take this dinar, make them lunch, and eat it with them?”

“Who,” said the dyer, “will guard the dye shop?”

“Your apprentice!” said Dalila.

“Very well,” he said.

He took a dish and its cover and went to make the lunch.

Then Dalila fetched the clothes and jewels from the perfumer, went back to the dye shop, and said to the dyer’s apprentice, “Follow your master. I will not move from here until you both return.”

“Yes,” he said, and when he left, she gathered up all the contents of the shop.

At that moment, along came a man driving a donkey, a hashish addict who had been out of work for a week. Dalila called to him, “Come here, donkey driver!”[19]

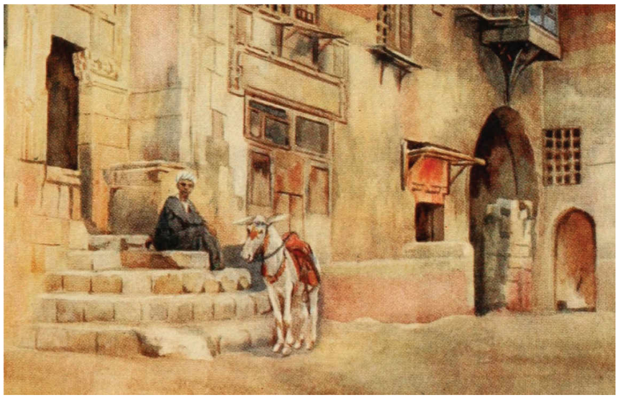

Illustration of a Cairo donkey driver by W. S. S. Tyrwhitt from Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus *(1912).*

When he reached her, she asked him, “Do you know my son the dyer?”

“I do,” he said.

“The poor boy is in debt,” she said, “and every time he goes to jail, I have to bail him out. Now we would like to make his bankruptcy official, and I am on my way to give these goods back to their owners. May I borrow your donkey to carry the load? Here is a dinar for its hire. While I am gone, empty out the vats and jars and break them, so if the judge sends an inspector, he will find nothing in the dye shop.”

“You can count on me,” he said. “I owe the dyer a favor.”

Then Dalila laid all her loot on the donkey, wrapped herself in her veil, and went to her own house.

“Mother,” said Zaynab, “my heart has been with you. What tricks have you played?”[20]

“I played four tricks,” said Dalila, “on four people: a young merchant, the wife of the chief of police, a dyer, and a donkey driver, and I have brought you the spoils on the donkey!”

“Oh, Mother,” Zaynab said, “how will you ever show yourself in town, now that you have robbed the wife of the chief of police, stripped the merchant, sacked the dyer’s shop, and stolen the donkey from its driver?”

“I only fear the donkey driver,” Dalila said. “He knows what I have done.”

* * *

MEANWHILE, the dyer prepared the meat and bread and gave them to his servant to carry on his head. When they returned to the dye shop, the dyer found the donkey driver breaking all the vats and jars, empty now of cloth and color, and the shop in ruins.

“Stop that, donkey driver!” he said.

The donkey driver looked up and said, “Thank God! My heart was with you.”

“Why? What happened?”

“You were in debt,” he said, “and now they have declared you bankrupt.”

The dyer said, “Who told you that?”

“Your mother,” said the donkey driver. “She had me break the jars and vats, so that if inspectors came, they would find nothing.”

“Damn it,” said the dyer. “My mother is long dead.”

And he beat his chest and cried, “My goods!”

“My donkey!” cried the donkey driver. “Your mother stole it from me.”

The dyer seized him and said, “Bring me the old woman.”

“Bring me back my donkey,” said the other, and they fell to blows until a crowd gathered around them …[21]

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Then a voice in the crowd said to the dyer, “What is the matter, Hajj Muhammad?”

“Let me tell you,” said the donkey driver. “I thought I was doing the dyer a favor, but he beat his chest and said his mother was dead, so I asked for my donkey back, since he clearly played this trick to steal it from me.”

From the crowd, another voice said to the dyer, “You must know the old woman, since you trusted her to guard your shop.”

“I do not know her,” said the dyer, “but today she moved into my house with her daughter.”

“I think,” said one, “the dyer has to compensate the donkey driver.”[22]

“Why?” another said.

“Because,” the first man said, “he only trusted the old woman with his donkey when he saw that the dyer had trusted her with his shop.”

“Hajj Muhammad,” said a third, “since she is in your house, it is up to you to get the man his donkey.”

They all headed to the dyer’s house, and more about them later.

* * *

Meanwhile, the young merchant waited for the old woman to come back with her daughter, but she did not come. And the young bride sat, expecting the woman’s return from her lunatic son, the sheikh’s assistant, but she did not come.

The young bride rose to visit the sheikh herself, and she found the young merchant, who said to her, “Come here! Where is your mother, who brought me here to marry you?”

“My mother is dead,” she said. “Are you the old woman’s son, assistant to the Sheikh of Plenty?”

“She is no mother of mine,”[23] he said. “She is a trickster who has cheated me out of my clothes and a thousand dinars.”

“Then she has also cheated me,” said the young bride. “She brought me here to see the Sheikh of Plenty and instead has stripped me.”

“Only you,” he said,[24] “can return my clothes and money.”

“Only you,” she said, “can return my dress and jewelry.”

Then the dyer entered, and, seeing them both undressed, he said, “Where is your mother?”

The young bride told him her story and the merchant told his, and the dyer cried, “My goods!”

And the donkey driver cried, “My donkey!”

Then the dyer said, “That old woman is a cheat. Get out and let me lock the door.”

“Shame on you,” said the young merchant. “We entered your house dressed and have to leave it naked….”

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

The dyer dressed the young merchant and the bride and sent her home. Then he shut the dye shop and said to the young merchant, “Come with me. Let us get the governor on the case.”

They went to the governor and told him their story, but the governor said, “This town is full of old women! Find her and bring her to me, and I will make her confess.”

So they went looking for her, and more about them later.

* * *

Meanwhile Dalila said to her daughter, “I want to play another trick.”

“I worry,” Zaynab said.

“I am like a bean husk,” said Dalila, “invulnerable to fire and water.”

She dressed up like a servant in a rich house[25] and went out searching for someone to cheat, and she came to an alley spread with carpets and lit by hanging lamps. There she heard the sound of singing and the beat of the frame drum, and she saw a handmaid bearing on her shoulder a young boy dressed in trousers embroidered with silver. On his head was a fez trimmed with pearls, at his throat a necklace of gold set with jewels, and down his back hung a velvet cloak.

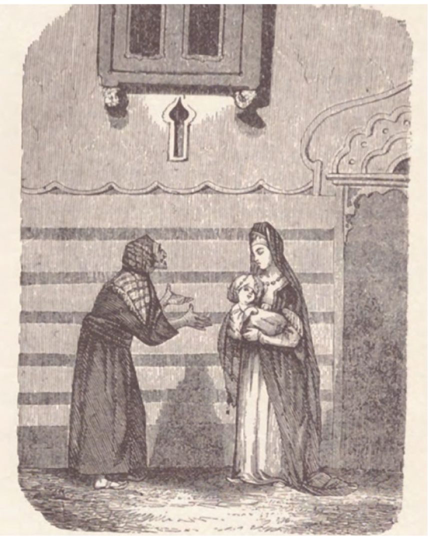
Now, the house in this alley[26] belonged to the chief of Baghdad’s merchant guild. The boy was his son, and he also had a virgin daughter who was engaged. They were marking her wedding that day.

The bride’s mother was attended by women and singers, but whenever she went upstairs or down, the boy would cling to her. So she called the maid and said, “Take your young master and play with him until our guests are gone.”

When Dalila saw the boy on the maid’s shoulder, she said, “What joy is this in your mistress’s house?”

“The singers are here,” she said, “to celebrate her daughter’s wedding.”

To herself, Dalila said, “The thing to do is to take the boy from the maid.”



Dalila sees the boy on the maid's shoulder. Illustration from Tausend und eine Nacht: Arabische *Erzählungen, translated by Gustav Weil (Stuttgart, 1866).*

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Dalila fished out of her pocket a small brass token resembling a coin, and she said to the maid, who was young and trusting, "Take this dinar and go to your mistress, tell her that the Mother of Mercy rejoices with her, and that on the day of the reception, she will come bearing gifts with her daughters."

"Yes," said the maid, "but my young master clings to his mother whenever he sees her."

"Leave him with me," said Dalila, "while you go inside."

The maid gave her the child, took the token, and went inside. Dalila disappeared with the boy down an alley, where she stripped him of his clothes and jewels.

"What could be more skillful,"[27] she said to herself, "having cheated the maid and taken the boy, than to pawn him for a thousand dinars?"

She went with the boy to the gemcutters' souq, where a Jewish goldsmith[28] was sitting before a case of jewels.

"What could be more skillful," she said to herself, "than to trick this man out of his gold, a thousand dinars' worth, and leave the boy in its place?"

The jeweler looked at them and recognized the son of the chief of the merchant guild. Now, this jeweler was a man of great wealth, but he would envy his neighbor if he made a sale and he himself did not.

"What are you looking for?" he asked Dalila.

"Are you the master Azariah?" she replied, having made sure to learn his name from others.

"I am," he said.

She said, "This boy's sister,[29] the chief of the merchant guild's daughter, is engaged to be married, and today is her wedding. She needs jewels: Give me two pairs of gold anklets, a pair of gold bracelets, pearl earrings, and also a girdle, a dagger, and a ring."

Dalila took from him a thousand dinars' worth, and said, "Let me bring these to the feast. They will choose what they like and I shall bring you the money. Until then, look after this boy."[30]

"Very well," he said.

Gold filigree pendant, inset with enamel in the form of birds, from Palestine or Egypt, eleventh century. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Then she carried the jewelry to her own house, and her daughter said, “What tricks have you played?”

And Dalila told her how she had taken the chief of the merchant guild’s son and stripped him, and pawned him for a thousand dinars’ worth of jewels.

“How will you ever show your face in this town again?” her daughter said.

* * *

Meanwhile, the maid went to her mistress and said, “The Mother of Mercy sends her greetings and rejoices with you. On the day of the reception, she and her daughters will come with presents for the bride.”

“Where is your young master?” asked the lady.

“I left him with her,” said the maid, “to stop him from clinging to you. She gave me this gift for the singers.”

“Take your gift,” said the lady to the lead singer, but she found it was only a brass token.

The lady said to the maid, “Go down, you silly girl, and check on your young master.”

The maid went down, and, finding neither Dalila nor the boy, shrieked and fell on her face, and their joy was changed to sorrow …

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And Shahrazad agreed.

The chief of the merchant guild appeared, and when he heard his son was lost, he set out on a search, joined by the other merchants,[31] each taking his own road. He did not rest until he found his boy, naked in the jeweler's shop.

"This is my son," he said, and picked him up, too happy even to ask about his clothes.

The jeweler stopped him and said, "Pardon me!"

"Why?"

"The old woman took from me a thousand dinars' worth of jewelry for your daughter, and she left this boy as a pledge for the price. I would not have let her go had she not left the child, as I knew him to be yours."

"My daughter needs no jewelry," said the merchant. "Give me the boy's clothes."

"Help me, Muslims!"[32] cried the jeweler.

Just then came the donkey driver, the dyer, and the young merchant, who were searching for Dalila and stopped to ask the cause of their dispute.

The merchant and the jeweler told their story, and the others said, "That old woman is a cheat. She has cheated us before you."

And they told them their own story. Then the chief of the merchant guild said, "Since I have found my son, let his clothes be his ransom. If I find the old woman, I will demand them of her."

He took the boy home to his mother, who rejoiced that he was safe.

The jeweler said to the three others, "Where are you going now?"

"To search for her," they said.

"Take me with you," said the jeweler. "Do any of you know her?"

"I know her," said the donkey driver.

"If we all go together," said the jeweler, "she will escape and we shall never catch her. Let each man take a different road, and let us meet again at the shop of Hajj Masoud, the Maghrebi barber."

Each man went on his way. Dalila had just come out to play another trick when the donkey driver saw her and recognized her face.

"Stop there!" he said. "How long have you been at your tricks? Give me back my donkey."

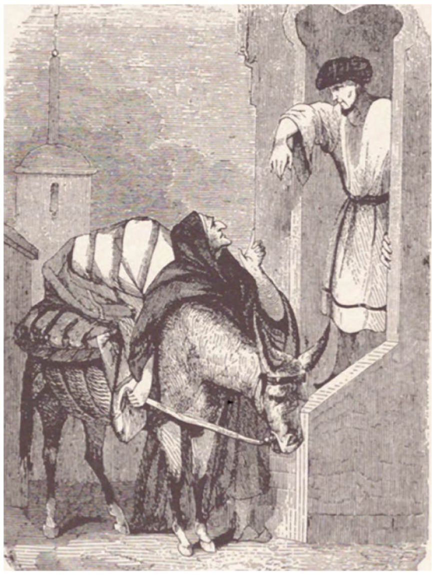
“Let what God has hidden remain hidden,” she said. “Do you want your donkey or the people’s things?”

“I want my donkey; that is all.”

“I saw that you were poor,” she said, “so I left your donkey with the Maghrebi barber. If you stand over there,[33] I will ask him gently to return it.”

She went up to the barber, kissed his hand, and wept.

“What is it?” said the barber.



Dalila went up to the barber. Illustration from Tausend und eine Nacht: Arabische Erzählungen, *translated by Gustav Weil (Stuttgart, 1866).*

“Look at my poor boy over there,” she said. “He went outside while he was ill, and the cold air undid his mind. He used to buy donkeys and now, when he stands he says nothing but, ‘My donkey!’ And when he sits he cries, ‘My donkey!’ And when he walks he cries, ‘My donkey!’ A doctor told me that his mind is disturbed and that the only cure is to remove two of his molars and brand his temples. Now take this dinar, call him, and say you have his donkey.”

“By the fast of Ramadan,” the barber said, “I’ll give him his donkey!”

The barber had with him two workmen, and he told one of them to heat the tools. Then he called the donkey driver, and Dalila went on her way …

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And Shahrazad agreed.

“Your donkey is with me,” the barber said. “Come and get it.”

The donkey driver followed the barber, who led him into a dark room. There the barber struck him down, his men bound his hands and feet, and the barber pulled out two of his molars,[34] branded each of his temples, and let him go.

The donkey driver stood up and said, “Why have you done this to me?”

“Your mother told me you had caught a cold and lost your mind,” replied the barber, “so if you sit or stand or walk, you say nothing but ‘My donkey!’”

“Why on earth,” said the boy, “have you pulled out my teeth?”

“Your mother told me to,” the barber said.

“God torment her!” said the boy, and both men went outside, quarreling.

When the barber returned to his shop, he found nothing inside, for while he was out, Dalila had removed all of its contents and taken them home, where she told her daughter all she had done.

The barber, seeing his shop empty, seized the donkey driver and said, “Bring me your mother.”

“She is not my mother,” he said. “She is a trickster who has cheated many people and has stolen my donkey.”

Just then came the dyer, the jeweler, and the young merchant, and when they saw the barber holding the donkey driver, who was branded on both temples, they said, “What happened to you?”

He told them his tale, and the barber told his, and the others said, “That woman is a trickster who has tricked us all.”

The barber locked his shop and went with them to the governor's house, and they said to him, "We look to you to help us."[35]

"This city is full of old women!" said the governor. "Do any of you know her?"

"I know her," said the donkey driver, "but give us ten of your men."

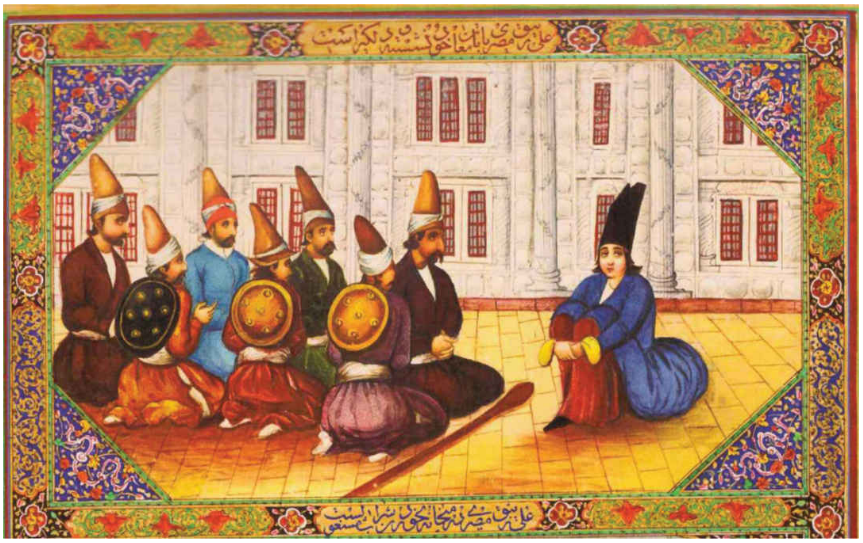
He went out with the governor's men, followed by the others, and they searched the city until at last they found Dalila. They arrested her[36] and took her to the governor's house, where they stopped under the windows and waited for him to come out.

But the governor's men, who had searched with them all night, soon fell asleep. Dalila pretended to sleep, too, until the donkey driver and his friends dozed off in turn, and she slipped away from them[37] and into the governor's harem.

There she met the lady of the house, kissed her hand, and asked, "Where is the governor?"

"Asleep," she said. "What do you want from him?"

"My husband," said Dalila, "is a slave trader. He gave me five mamluks to sell[38] while he is away, and the governor offered to buy them for twelve hundred dinars if I brought them to his house, so I have brought them…."



Dalila is arrested and taken to the governor's house. The Golestan Palace Library manuscript of the 1843 Persian translation of the Nights, *illustrated by Sani' al-Molk and his studio. Courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Now, the governor did indeed have one thousand dinars, which he had asked his wife to set aside for the buying of slaves, so when she heard Dalila’s story, she believed it, and she said, “Where are the slaves?”

“Asleep,” said Dalila, “under the window.”

The lady looked out and saw the barber dressed in mamluk clothes, and the young merchant, very like a mamluk, and the jeweler and the dyer and the donkey driver resembling shaven mamluks. She said to herself, “They are worth more than a thousand apiece.”

She opened a chest and gave Dalila the thousand dinars, and said, “If you wait until my husband wakes, I will get the remaining two hundred from him.”

“My lady,” said Dalila, “the first hundred is yours for the drink you have poured me. Keep the other hundred until I return, and let me out by the secret door.”

The lady let her out, and Dalila veiled herself and went home to her daughter.

“Mother,” said Zaynab, “what have you done?”

“I tricked the governor’s wife out of a thousand dinars, and I sold five men into slavery: the donkey driver, the jeweler, the dyer, the barber, and the young merchant. I only fear the donkey driver; he knows what I have done.”

“Mother,” Zaynab said, “sit down. You have done enough. The pitcher does not always return safely from the well.”

* * *

When the governor awoke, his wife said, “Congratulations on the slaves you bought.”

“What slaves?” the governor said.

“Why do you deny it?” said his wife. “Let us hope they rise to your station one day.”

“On my life,” he said, “I have bought no slaves! Who told you this?”

“The very woman,” said his wife, “who found them for you, and to whom you promised twelve hundred dinars.”

“Did you give her the money?”

“Only after I had seen the slaves myself,” she said. “Their outfits alone were worth one thousand dinars.”

The governor went outside and found the barber and the jeweler, the dyer and the donkey driver, and the merchant’s son….

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

He said to his men, “Where are the slaves we bought from the old woman?”

“There are no slaves,” they said, “only these five. They captured the old woman and brought her here, but when we fell asleep, she escaped and went inside. Then a maid came out and asked if these were the five men who came with the old woman. We said they were.”

“This is the biggest trick of all!”[39] the governor said.

The five men said to him, “We look to you for what we lost.”

“Your mistress,” said the governor, “has sold you to me for a thousand dinars.”

“God does not permit it,” they replied. “We are free and may not be sold. We will appeal to the caliph.”

As they were talking, Hassan Road-Hazard appeared. Returning from his journey, he had found his wife stripped of her clothes, heard her story, and declared, “The governor is to blame!”

He now said to the governor, “Do you permit old women to go about the town, tricking people and stealing their things? This is your duty. I look to you for what my wife has lost.”

Then he turned to the five men and asked, “What is the matter with you?”

They told him their stories and he said, “You have been wronged.”

And to the governor he said, “Why have you arrested them?”

“It was they,” said the governor, “who led the old woman to my house, where she took a thousand dinars of my money and sold them to my wife. But listen: I will compensate your wife and take the blame for the old woman. Which of you knows her?”

They cried, “We all know her. Give us ten men and we will find her.”

He gave them ten men, and the donkey driver said, “Follow me. I would know her even with blue eyes.”

Dalila was turning a corner when at last—there she was!—they saw her, seized her, and took her to the governor.

“Where are these men’s belongings?” he asked.

“I have taken nothing,” she said, “and seen nothing.”

“Lock her up till morning,” said the governor to the jailer.

But the jailer said, “I won’t go near her![40] She might play some trick on me, and I’d be liable if she escaped.”

So the governor rode out with Dalila to the riverbank and had the hangman hang her by her hair. She was hoisted up, and the governor ordered ten men to watch her and went home. Then night fell and sleep came over the watchmen.

* * *

NOW, there was a Bedouin[41] who had overheard a man say to his friend, “Welcome home! Where have you been?”

“In Baghdad,” replied the friend, “where I ate honey fritters for breakfast.”

The Bedouin thought, “I must go to Baghdad and eat honey fritters,” for he had never in his life seen Baghdad or tasted honey fritters.

He mounted his horse and, as he rode, he said, “By the honor of the Arabs, I shall eat nothing but honey fritters!”

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Soon the Bedouin reached the place where Dalila was hanging and the watchmen were sleeping. As he passed, she heard him speak of honey fritters. He noticed her, went near, and said, “Who are you?”

“I beg your protection, Sheikh!”

“God protect you,” he said, “but why do you hang here?”

“I have an enemy,” she said, “a seller of fritters. I stopped to buy from him, but my spit fell on the fritters. So he complained to the governor, who ordered my hanging[42] and said, ‘Take ten pounds of honey fritters and feed them to her as she hangs. If she eats them, let her go. If she doesn’t, leave her hanging.’ The problem is, I cannot stand sweet things.”

“By the honor of the Arabs,” said the Bedouin, “I have traveled here for nothing but to eat honey fritters! I will eat them for you.”

“It does not count,” she said, “unless you hang in my place.”

He fell into the trap[43] and set her free, and she tied him up after she had stripped him of his clothes. Then she took his cloak and turban, wrapped herself in them, mounted his horse, and rode home.

“What now?” her daughter asked.

“They had me hanged,” she said, and she reported what had happened with the Bedouin.

* * *

THE FIRST to wake up roused the others and they saw that day had broken, so one of them looked up and said, “Dalila!”

“I have not eaten for a day,”[44] the Bedouin said. “Have you brought the honey fritters?”

“That’s a Bedouin!” they exclaimed, and asked him where Dalila was and who had let her go.

“I did,” he said. “She would not eat the honey fritters.”

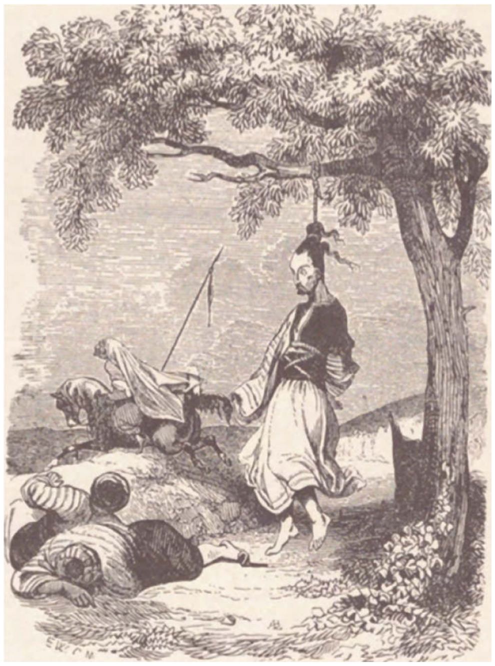
Then they understood that the man knew nothing of her case and she had tricked him, too. They said to one another, “Shall we run away or wait to see what God has written for us?”

But the governor was arriving, followed by all those who had been tricked by the old woman, and to the guards he said, “Release her.”

“I have not eaten for a day,” the Bedouin said. “Have you brought the honey fritters?”

Looking up, the governor saw a Bedouin hanging there instead of the old woman, and to the watchmen he said, “What is this?”

“Forgive us, master….”



The Bedouin is left hanging in Dalila’s place. Illustration from Tausend und eine Nacht: Arabische Erzählungen, *translated by Gustav Weil (Stuttgart, 1866).*

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

“What happened?” asked the governor.

“We got tired of watching her,” they said. “She was hanging, after all. We fell asleep, and when we woke, we found the Bedouin hanging there instead. We are at your mercy.”

“She is a trickster,” said the governor. “You are forgiven.”

They untied the Bedouin, who threw himself at the governor and said, “I look to you for my clothes and my horse!”

He told him his story, and the governor was astonished.

“Why,” he said, “did you set her free?”

“I could not have known she was a cheat,” the Bedouin said.

Then the others said to the governor, “We want reparations for our loss.[45] We brought you the old woman and she was under your guard. We shall appeal to the caliph’s court.”

Hassan Road-Hazard had just arrived in the caliph’s court when in came the governor with the Bedouin and the other five, saying, “We have been wronged!”

“Who has wronged you?” asked the caliph.

Each came forward to tell his story. Then the governor said, “Commander of the Faithful, the old woman has cheated me, too, and she sold me these five men as slaves although they are free-born.”

The caliph said, “I take upon myself what you have lost.”

And to the governor he said, “I hold you responsible for the old woman.”

“I will not answer for her,” said the governor, “for after I had hung her on the cross, she tricked this Bedouin into letting her go, tied him up in her place, and made off with his clothes and horse.”

“Who else should answer for her?” said the caliph.

“Ahmad the Plague,”[46] said the governor, “for he has a thousand dinars a month and forty men at his bidding, each with a monthly wage of a hundred dinars.”

“Ahmad!” said the caliph.

“At your service,” he replied.

“I order you to bring us the old woman.”

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Ahmad and his men withdrew and said to one another, “How shall we ever find her? This town is full of old women!”

[Ahmad turned to Calamity Hasan.[47] “What do you suggest?” he asked.]

Another man, named Ali Camel-Shoulder, spoke up. “Why would you ask Calamity Hasan?” he said. “How can you trust his judgment?”

“How dare you!”[48] said Calamity Hasan. “Go without me.”

And he walked out in anger.

Then Ahmad the Plague said, “Let each of you take ten men, pick a quarter, and search it for Dalila.”

Ali Camel-Shoulder and the others did as they were told. Before dispersing, they agreed to meet again in such-and-such a street. And as the news spread in the city that Ahmad the Plague was under orders to arrest Dalila the Crafty, Zaynab said to her mother, “If you were really clever,[49] you would play a trick on Ahmad and his men.”

“My girl,” Dalila said, “the only one I fear is Calamity Hasan.”

“As I have hair on my head,” said Zaynab, “I swear to get you the clothes of all forty-one men.”

She rose, dressed and veiled herself, and went to see a perfumer whose shop had two doors.

“Here is a dinar for your shop,” she said. “Rent it to me for the day.”

He gave her the keys, and she fetched carpets on the stolen donkey and spread them around the shop, and placed trays of food in every corner. Then she stood at the door with her face uncovered, just as Ali Camel-Shoulder and his men walked by.

She kissed his hand, and because she was beautiful,[50] he fell for her and said, “What would you like?”

“Are you the watchman Ahmad the Plague?” she said.

“No,” he said, “but I am of his company. My name is Ali Camel-Shoulder.”

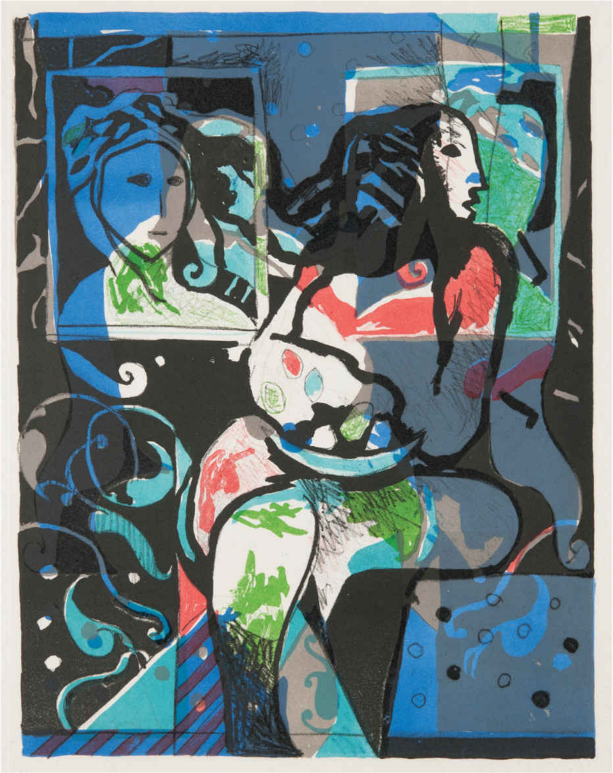
“Where are you going?” she asked.

“We are searching for a sly old woman who has stolen other people’s property, and we mean to arrest her. But who are you, and what are you selling?”

“My father was a wine merchant in Mosul,” said Zaynab. “When he died, I inherited some money and came here, afraid of the authorities. I asked for protection, and I was told to look no further than Ahmad the Plague.”

The men said, “You are under his protection from now on.”

“Do me a favor,” she said. “Come in and taste my food.”



Zaynab's ruse casts her in the role of a femme fatale in this story. Other Nights *tales contain variations on this character type. In "The Tale of the Jewish Doctor" (in the story cycle of "The Hunchback"), a young man is seduced by a mysterious young woman and implicated in a murder.* The Tale of the Jewish Doctor *by Dia Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.*

They stepped inside and ate and drank until they were drunk. Then she drugged them with henbane[51] and stripped them of their clothes and weapons.

Just then, Ahmad the Plague, who was looking for Dalila and could not find her or his men, walked past the girl himself.

She kissed his hand, and he looked at her and fell for her.

"Are you the watchman Ahmad the Plague?" she asked.

"I am, and who are you?"

"I am a stranger from Mosul," she said. "My father was a wine merchant who died and left me some money. Then I came here and opened this tavern, but now the governor has imposed a tax on me. I ask for your protection."[52]

"Do not pay him a thing," he said. "You are welcome here."

"It would make me happy if you came in to taste my food," she said.

He went in, and he ate and drank until he could no longer sit. Then she drugged him with henbane and stripped him, and with the donkey and the Bedouin’s horse, she made off with all the men’s clothes.

On her way out, she roused Ali Camel-Shoulder, and when he awoke, he found that he was naked, and he saw that Ahmad the Plague and the others had been drugged. He revived them with an antidote, and they too woke to find themselves unclothed.

“Friends!” said Ahmad. “What is this? We meant to catch her, but she has caught us![53] Calamity Hasan will never let us forget it. Let us wait till dark before we leave.”

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

Meanwhile, just as Calamity Hasan asked the chief of police where his men were, he saw them arrive naked, and he said these lines:

Desires of men are much alike:
The difference lies in their deeds
Some are thick as weeds, some wise
And stars now dull, now bright

He said to his companions, “Who has tricked you out of your clothes?”

“We were after the old woman,” they said, “but a pretty girl stripped us.”

“What else did she do?” said Hasan.

“Do you know her?” they asked.

“I know her,” said Hasan, “and the old woman, too.”

“What shall we say to the caliph?” they asked.

“Shake your collar in front of him, and when he says, ‘Why did you not arrest her?’ say that you don’t know her, but Calamity Hasan does. And if he asks me, I will catch her.”

In the morning, they returned to the caliph’s court and kissed the ground before him.

“Where is the old woman?” said the caliph.

But Ahmad the Plague only shook his collar, and when the caliph asked him why, he said, “I do not know her. Calamity Hasan, who knows her and her daughter, is better placed to catch her.”

Then Hasan spoke.

“She has not played these tricks,” he said, “because she wanted other people’s things, but only to prove her and her daughter’s skill, so that you would keep on paying them her husband’s (the girl’s father’s) wage.”

And Hasan pleaded for her life to be spared.

“On my ancestors,” the caliph said, “if she gives back what she has taken, I will pardon her.”

“Give me an assurance,” said Hasan, and the caliph gave him the handkerchief of assurance.

Hasan went to Dalila’s house and called to her. Zaynab answered, and he asked her where her mother was.

“Inside,” she said.

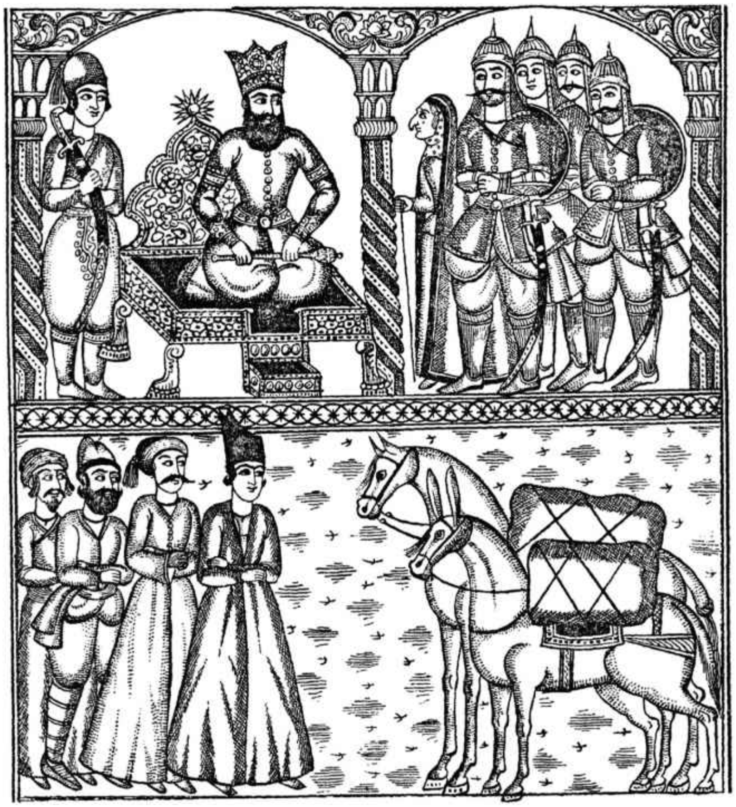
“Tell her to bring the people’s things,” he said, “and come with me to the caliph. I have brought the handkerchief of assurance. If she will not come, she has only herself to blame.”

Dalila came down, tied the handkerchief around her neck, and gave him the goods she had taken, along with the donkey and the Bedouin’s horse.

“There remain,” he said, “the clothes of my chief and his men.”

“By the holiest name,” she said, “I did not take them.”

“I believe you,” he said. “It was your daughter Zaynab’s doing.”



Dalila is brought before Caliph Harun al-Rashid. From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of The Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

He led her to the court, laid out the stolen goods before the caliph, and brought Dalila forward.

The caliph, when he saw her, ordered that she be thrown into the bloody grave,[54] but she cried, “I count on your protection, Hasan!”

Hasan rose and kissed the caliph’s hands, and said, “Pardon, my lord. You gave me an assurance.”

“I pardon her for your sake,” said the caliph. “Now rise, old woman. What is your name?”

“My name is Dalila,” she said.

“You are a crafty rogue,” the caliph said. And so she became known as Dalila the Crafty.

“Why have you played all these tricks on our people and tired our hearts?”

“Not for lust of property,” she said. “I heard tell of all the tricks Ahmad the Plague and Calamity Hasan played in Baghdad, and I decided I would do the same. Now I have returned the people’s things.”

The donkey driver rose and said, “That is not all. Not only did she steal my donkey, she told the barber to tear out my molars and burn me on both temples….”

* * *

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The caliph compensated the donkey driver[55] with a hundred dinars. He gave the same to the dyer, and said, “Go and set up your dye shop again.”

They blessed the caliph and left. The Bedouin, taking his clothes and horse, went after them, regretting his journey to Baghdad to eat honey fritters. And all those who had been robbed took their goods and went home.

Then the caliph said to Dalila, “What is it that you want?”

“My father,” she said, “was keeper of your carrier pigeons and taught me how to rear them, and my husband was the watchman of Baghdad. I want my husband’s salary. My daughter wants her father’s.”

The caliph granted her request. Then Dalila said, “I have another wish: to be the keeper of your khan.”

This was a khan the caliph had built, three stories high, to house traveling merchants. Working there were forty slaves and forty dogs the caliph had brought from the King of Sulaymaniyah when he deposed him. Also in the khan was a cook, also enslaved, who cooked for the slaves and fed meat to the dogs.

“The khan is yours to keep,” the caliph said to Dalila. “Should anything go missing, you will be liable.”

“Fine,” she said, “but let me lodge my daughter in the pavilion beside the khan. It has a wide roof, and carrier pigeons must be reared in open space.”

The caliph granted this, too. Dalila moved her daughter into the pavilion with all her things, along with the forty pigeons trained to carry royal messages, and Zaynab hung up the forty-one garments she had taken from Ahmad the Plague and his men.

Dalila took her seat behind the gate of the khan. Every day, she went to the divan in case the caliph had a message for the pigeons to deliver (the slaves kept watch in her absence), and she stayed there until evening, when the dogs were let out to guard the khan through the night. That is the adventure of Dalila the Crafty in the city of Baghdad.

Laleh Khorramian, Sudden Onset *(2006). Born in Tehran, Khorramian is a visual artist and designer based in upstate New York. Printed by permission of the artist.*

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1. *a man named Ahmad the Plague and another called Calamity Hasan:* These two characters—Ahmad al-Danaf and Hasan Shuman—appear in three stories in the *1001 Nights* (including "The Adventures of Mercury 'Ali of Cairo" and "The Tale of Aladdin of the Beautiful Moles"), all of which feature thieves and rogues. Together with Dalila, they were also featured in the epic story cycle known as "The Tale of Ali Zaybaq," which was popular in Egypt in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The antics of these rogues seem to have had a historical basis. Boaz Shoshan asserts that a criminal named Ahmad al-Danaf was executed in Egypt in 1486, and a birthday celebration in his honor took place in a Cairo cemetery in the early twentieth century (p. 50).

2. *"They are to be heard and obeyed":* The co-opting of high-profile criminal gangs to work in law enforcement in medieval Baghdad has been historically documented. In the ninth century, armed bands of militia engaged in a virtual civil war, and their leaders exerted control over large parts of Baghdad by the eleventh century. Recognizing the reality on the ground, authorities incorporated the gangs into state service (Shoshan, p. 50).

3. *"A table is spread for them noon and night":* It is clear that the motive for Dalila's ruses is her desire to prove that she is just as capable as Ahmad and Hasan and thus should earn the stipend

that they enjoy.

4. *“play some trick that will make our name in Baghdad”:* If Ahmad and Hasan have earned their positions by becoming notorious criminals, Dalila concludes that she must establish her own reputation as an ingenious thief so that she will be co-opted into the system of power in the same way. She, too, would like a thousand dinars a month (the wage her husband had earned), as well as the respect that comes with the caliph’s official recognition of her exceptional skills.

5. *wrapped herself in clothes such as poor Sufis wear:* The use of the disguise of a Sufi was common enough that, in his thirteenth-century treatise on tricksters, Al-Jawbari warned of the tricks of fraudulent holy men (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 144).

6. *Hassan Road-Hazard:* Edward Powys Mathers translates the nickname for this character as “Street Scourge” (p. 490). The appellation indicates a violent temperament, but this character is an emir, a man of wealth and influence in this kingdom, and hence a worthy target for Dalila’s ruse.

7. *“lure that woman from her husband’s house”:* The wealthy wife sequestered in her own home is a target of opportunity for Dalila. This ruse represents a challenge that will allow her to show her trickster skills and establish her reputation.

8. *“let me drink from your pitcher”:* The pitcher is a prop that demonstrates the ceremonial purity of the holy woman.

9. *“This woman is a mystic!”:* Dalila’s success, like that of many con artists, depends on her ability to “read” people within their particular social conditions. Here she clearly guesses the financial hardship the porter is experiencing—probably a safe assumption in this context.

10. *“any barren woman who visits him conceives”:* Dalila quickly finds a vulnerability that she can exploit. Dressed as a Sufi holy woman, she suggests a visit to a Sufi sheikh, who she claims can employ magic to solve the woman’s fertility problems. During the period when this story was created and integrated into the *Nights*, a strong association was made between Sufis and the occult sciences. By the sixteenth century, Sufi dervishes and mendicants often provided amulets or written talismanic charms for magical purposes (Shoshan, p. 53).

11. *Dalila noted this:* An important part of Dalila’s artifice is her ability to access knowledge through the city and to use her talent for improvising as she detects opportunities in its streets and marketplaces.

12. *“but a sign I have received”:* This story provides glimpses of the popular superstitions among the ordinary residents of Cairo during the medieval period. Dalila’s suggestion that she had received a sign—presumably through divination or a dream—is easily accepted.

13. *took with him a thousand dinars:* The merchant takes the money with him to ensure that he has the funds needed to conclude the marriage contract.

14. like the colocasia seller’s knife: The colocasia is a perennial plant sometimes called “elephant ear,” which is known for its large heart-shaped leaves and edible tubers. This description of the

seller reflects the earthy quality of *Nights* tales that appealed to popular audiences. Dalila will exploit her knowledge of the seller's sexual preferences to create another ruse.

15. *"Let us share your home":* Dalila uses the rhetoric of hospitality while she appeals to the dyer's sexual interest in her two young companions.

16. *"I will lay them for you on the sheikh's screen for good luck":* This is another suggestion of a common superstition—the implication being that proximity to the holiness of the sheikh would bring blessings to the wearer of the clothing.

17. *"so they envied me":* Dalila's tales must always appear convincing, and she has an undeniable talent for identifying the artful lie that might be persuasive under the circumstances. In this case, the meddling of an envious neighbor would not be unusual. Envy is one of the commonest motives for characters' behavior in the stories of the *Nights*, and this accords with the widespread belief in the dangers of the evil eye and the need for protections against it.

18. *She deposited her loot with a perfumer she knew:* The shops and merchants mentioned in this story give a sense of the rich variety of markets in medieval Cairo, or in Baghdad in the period of Harun al-Rashid. Dalila's success is largely dependent on her intimate knowledge of the complex environment of shopkeepers and tradespeople.

19. *"Come here, donkey driver!":* Dalila is trying to multiply the number of ruses she can string together, so she adds the easy target of the poor donkey driver. His use of hashish would have made him an unsympathetic figure to many who listened to this story. The use of drugs was strongly disapproved of by many respectable members of Egyptian society, and Mamluk authorities in Cairo occasionally attempted to suppress their use (Burton, vol. 7, p. 160, n. 1).

20. *"What tricks have you played?":* Zaynab serves as the first listener for Dalila's tales of trickery, and their relationship introduces an internal frame to this tale. Zaynab can be seen as a surrogate for the shocked reaction of the general public, which is what this grand performance is meant to provoke.

21. *they fell to blows until a crowd gathered around them:* One of the characteristic pleasures of Dalila's craft is the way in which she turns her victims against one another while she escapes capture. The involvement of the crowd in this spectacle marks an escalation in the performance that Dalila is constructing, and it is key to her objective of winning a reputation that will bring her to the caliph's notice.

22. *"the dyer has to compensate the donkey driver":* In a moment that exemplifies the urban quality of this story, the crowd intervenes to adjudicate blame and demand recompense. The use of the crowd as another character in the story was bound to appeal to an audience composed of a wide array of lower-class listeners, in addition to respectable merchants.

23. *"She is no mother of mine":* Dalila's ability to play the role of mother to many of the other characters in the story is one of the keys to her success. She demonstrates the power that actually existed in this social role in medieval Islamic societies.

24. *"Only you," he said:* The conventions of the standard tale of romantic love are subverted in this moment of recognition. In love stories in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, love at first

sight will lead to a determined pursuit of the object of desire (often facilitated by the intervention of an old woman). In contrast, this young merchant quickly turns on the beautiful woman who had previously caught his eye.

25. *She dressed up like a servant in a rich house:* Dalila adopts another disguise associated with the humbler classes of the city—a disguise that might give her access to the private areas so often protected by the wealthy. Disguises are also a key element in “The Adventures of Mercury ‘Ali,” another *1001 Nights* story that features Dalila and her daughter Zaynab among its cast of rogues. In this story, Ali adopts the disguises of a groom, a snake-charmer, and a pregnant woman—all in an attempt to steal a purse of a thousand dinars from the shop of Dalila’s brother (another expert rogue), and thus to earn permission to marry Zaynab.

26. *the house in this alley:* The city is Dalila’s hunting ground, and since she is particularly adept at reading its signs, she finds another opportunity to make mischief. The layout of the city in this story corresponds to the usual principles of Islamic urban design. Residences, especially those of the wealthy, were protected from public view behind unbroken walls at street level. Entrances were discreetly placed on narrow streets—alleys or cul-de-sacs—thus protecting them from the eyes of passing strangers.

27. *“What could be more skillful”:* Dalila’s intention is not to endanger the boy, but rather to compound her ruses with additional feats of trickery to demonstrate her exceptional skills and win the reputation and rewards she feels she deserves.

28. *where a Jewish goldsmith:* Jews were frequently represented as employed in the trading of gold and gemstones. This corresponds to historical research on the position of Jews in Islamic societies (Sadan, “*Arabian Nights* and the Jews”).

29. *“This boy’s sister”:* Once again, Dalila tells a likely story to her victim, since a marriage in the family of a prominent member of the merchant community would have been common knowledge. The ability to play upon expectations in this way is another part of the mastery she demonstrates on this day. In his memoir, Hanna Diyab records a similar ruse involving a boy’s abduction in a story about a female trickster. In a series of interlocking ruses that resemble those of Dalila, this French trickster bought a large quantity of valuable Indian fabrics for 5000 *écus* and told the merchant to send his servant boy with her to collect the money. When he sent his son with her, she dropped the boy off at a monastery, claiming he was her dissolute son who was squandering all her family money and therefore required discipline. She kept the goods, and eventually the boy was returned to his father.

30. *look after this boy:* Dalila’s cons appear in Persian literature as far back as the eleventh century, according to Ulrich Marzolph. In *Relief after Hardship*, an Ottoman Turkish collection dating to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, Dalila swindles a blind man out of the coat in which he carries his money, only to leave him as security for stones she takes from a jeweler (*101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 365).

31. *joined by the other merchants:* By now, there has been an escalation in the response to Dalila’s escapades, causing the other merchants to mobilize. The city is in an uproar, but this has been Dalila’s objective all along.

32. *“Help me, Muslims!”:* The Jewish jeweler appeals for aid to the surrounding community of traders and merchants. His expectation of aid provides insight into the mechanisms of social order in an urban society.

33. *“If you stand over there”:* The donkey driver is presented as a particularly gullible figure, which might be explained by the implication that he is a regular user of hashish.

34. *the barber pulled out two of his molars:* During the medieval period, barbers performed tooth extractions and certain medical treatments, including bloodletting. Cauterization was considered an appropriate treatment for mental illness by some, and the branding of the donkey driver should be understood in this context. During his trip through Egypt in 1707, Hanna Diyab (who contributed stories to the French *Arabian Nights*) discovered a Christian monk using brands to treat patients in this way.

35. *“We look to you to help us”:* They are not simply asking the governor to arrest the woman, but also to compensate them for their losses.

36. *They arrested her:* The brief description of Dalila’s capture reveals that this is not really the climax of the story, unlike in contemporary crime stories.

37. *slipped away from them:* Escaping from her captors is just the first step in a more daring ruse as she successfully infiltrates the governor’s harem—a space that would be considered particularly secure.

38. *“He gave me five mamluks to sell”:* Mamluks are slaves who might serve in either a military or an administrative capacity, including in the higher echelons of power. They were generally more highly valued than household slaves.

39. *“This is the biggest trick of all!”:* Dalila has succeeded in playing a trick on the governor himself, in what might be considered the culmination of her sequence of ruses. The boldness of the trick is reminiscent of “The Tale of the Sharper of Alexandria and the Chief of Police,” in which a thief returns a stolen purse to the chief of police, only to show how much cleverer it would be to steal it again—from the chief of police himself. Such stories were important additions to the Egyptian manuscripts of the *Nights* and must have resonated with audiences who enjoyed seeing judicial authorities mocked.

40. *“I won’t go near her!”:* By now, Dalila has acquired such a formidable reputation that no one wants to approach her. The contrast between the simple appearance of the old woman and the chaos and fear of those entrusted with maintaining public order is key to the appeal of this kind of rogue story.

41. *there was a Bedouin:* Characters that are not a natural part of the city are treated roughly in the stories of the *Nights*. Peasants and Bedouin are often portrayed in the unflattering light seen in this story.

42. *“the governor, who ordered my hanging”:* Again Dalila creates a story that might be expected to evoke a response from a popular audience. Harsh and seemingly arbitrary punishment at the hands of the governor would not be a surprise. Dalila’s ruse is not intended to point out the injustice of this system, but rather to get a piece of the pie.

43. *He fell into the trap:* These plot elements are sketched in rudimentary detail. The incredible boldness of such an escape is meant to astound the audience, and it is not necessary to explain it to them in detail. The trick of exchanging places with someone when faced with imminent death is another popular ruse in stories of tricksters and rogues. Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen note that a scene like this is included in a seventeenth-century history of Ahmed Mohammed al-Maqqari (p. 164).

44. *"I have not eaten for a day":* The Bedouin is saved and fed in the end, but in the related tale of "Aladdin of the Beautiful Moles," a criminal is hanged in place of Aladdin when he is sentenced to death after being framed by a master thief. The famous rogues Ahmad the Plague, Calamity Hasan, and Mercury 'Ali rescue him and substitute the criminal to be executed in his place.

45. *"We want reparations for our loss":* This is a society in which honor may be offended, but the most important accounting is done in accordance with the value of goods won and lost.

46. *"Ahmad the Plague":* The audience for the tale would know that this character was a notorious thief in his own right, so the irony of this moment would be clear.

47. *Ahmad turned to Calamity Hasan:* This passage is missing from the manuscript used for this translation but has been added here for clarity.

48. *"How dare you!":* This is a dispute among thieves. The original audience for these tales would wonder why any of these authorities could be trusted, for they all stand at the top of an order that is seen as swindling more people than Dalila.

49. *"If you were really clever":* After pretending to worry about her mother throughout the story, Zaynab now dares her to try one last con on someone who knows all about the tricks that criminals use to get ahead. When she does not bite, Zaynab decides to take on the challenge herself. These competitions among thieves are an integral part of the rogue tales in the *Nights*.

50. *because she was beautiful:* The use of seductive women to lure unsuspecting men into the hands of criminals was a documented part of the activity of the gangs that operated in Mamluk Cairo. Robert Irwin writes about a 1264 case involving a woman living in the Husayniyya Quarter named Ghazia, who invited unsuspecting victims into a house where her two male confederates robbed and murdered them. The corpses would eventually be disposed of in the furnace of another criminal. All five were caught and executed by crucifixion (pp. 142–43). By comparison, Zaynab's tricks are playful.

51. *Then she drugged them with henbane:* Henbane is a potent type of nightshade. The use of drugs by tricksters to knock out their target is common in rogue tales, and in his thirteenth-century treatise on common ruses, Al-Jawbari provides examples so that readers would be forewarned (Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 153).

52. *"I ask for your protection":* This scene reveals the perception that police officials were no more honest than the criminals they were supposed to be controlling. Protection could be brokered for a price.

53. *“but she has caught us!”:* In dramatic fashion, Zaynab has proven her skill as a trickster. She will go on to feature in another tale, “The Adventures of Mercury ‘Ali of Cairo,” in which she and her mother conspire to steal the clothes of a notorious trickster named ‘Ali al-Zaybaq, who has just arrived in Cairo. ‘Ali will steal them back in an impressive riposte and then seek to make Zaynab his wife by completing a series of audacious thefts.

54. *ordered that she be thrown into the bloody grave:* This is a rash decision, given the caliph’s earlier assurance to Hasan, but the stories of Harun al-Rashid often contain examples of this kind of impulsive behavior (such as in “The Story of the Three Apples”).

55. *The caliph compensated the donkey driver:* Caliph Harun al-Rashid plays his typical role in the *One Thousand and One Nights*: tying up the loose ends of the story by compensating characters for their losses and providing boons for others. Unlike in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” there are no marriages to be arranged, but Zaynab’s betrothal to another rogue is the subject of the sequel to this story (“The Adventures of Mercury ‘Ali of Cairo”).

THE STORY OF SINBAD THE SAILOR[1]

"Sinbad the Sailor" has been one of the most popular tales associated with the Arabian Nights *since the story collection first circulated in Western languages in the eighteenth century. Horace Walpole sang the story's praises in 1789: "Read Sinbad the Sailor's voyages, and you will be sick of Aeneas's." As in classical Greek works such* as The Odyssey, *the voyages of Sinbad built on the contrast between the pleasures of home and the strange dangers that lie in unknown realms beyond the sea. These seven tales all straddle the ambiguous territory between fact and fiction as they recount stories of fabulous creatures, shocking events, and exotic settings. The potent blend of realism and magic made these stories particular favorites of Gabriel García Márquez, who brought this mixture to his own fiction.*

"The Story of Sinbad the Sailor" was first published as part of the French translation of the Arabian Nights *produced by Antoine Galland; however, a seventeenth-century Turkish manuscript of the* One Thousand and One Nights *included the voyages of Sinbad, and the stories appear to have been associated with the* Nights *in other contexts. Some scholars see the root of Sinbad's tale in the ancient Egyptian tale of "The Shipwrecked Sailor" (dated to the Middle Kingdom), but there is little doubt that the story cycle that survives in Arabic manuscript form is closely linked to the tales of mariners and the geographic knowledge circulating in the Arab world from the ninth century onward. The adventures of Sinbad thus reflect*

the world of trade that linked the Middle East to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea from the golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate.

The tales unfold as a kind of guidebook for prospective merchants provided by the wealthy merchant Sinbad "the Sailor" to the poor porter who has arrived at his door. While Sinbad "the Porter" looks on the fabulous wealth that the merchant has accumulated as evidence of fate's fickleness, Sinbad's stories make the implicit claim that it is the justifiable reward for his entrepreneurial spirit and resourcefulness in meeting extraordinary challenges (Miquel, 79–101). The stories also outline a set of values shared by merchants in foreign territories that make traveling long distances profitable, despite the many difficulties posed by storms at sea, menacing creatures, and the continued existence of pockets of pagan belief and alien customs.

The character of Sinbad has taken on a life of its own in popular culture, but, in the original tale, he is less a distinct personality than simply a vehicle for the plot. He has been seen as the prototype of a "narrative man"—in Tzvetan Todorov's terms—who simply reacts to circumstances rather than expressing a particular inner psychology. Other commentators take Sinbad's conflicting desires for the pleasures of home and the material rewards of travel more seriously in their evaluations of his character. In his psychoanalytic assessment, Bruno Bettelheim argues that Sinbad represents the tension between the subconscious desires for pleasure and adventure centered in the id and the rational understanding of the importance of home centered in the ego. In this interpretation, the two Sinbads who meet at the beginning of the story personify the psychological conflict that will be played out throughout the seven voyages. Later appropriations of Sinbad follow this psychological interpretation. In the last days of the Hapsburg Empire, Gyula Krúdy reimagined Sinbad as a melancholic womanizer who travels through the territories of time and memory.

The stories of Sinbad were a natural fit for theater audiences who relished exotic settings and monstrous creatures, and the tale became a staple of the British pantomime repertoire by the nineteenth century. Building on the many adaptations of the story for children, "Sinbad" became the basis for a film trilogy with groundbreaking special effects by Roy Harryhausen that starts with The 7th Voyage of Sinbad *in 1958. In* *these films, Sinbad was transformed from the epitome of a resourceful merchant into a swashbuckling seafarer with a taste for adventure, and it is in that form that the hero’s encounters with the challenges of the sea and the fabulous creatures of distant lands have had their greatest impact on directors such as Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Peter Jackson, and Guillermo del Toro.*

THE STORY GOES, said Shahrazad, that there lived in Baghdad[2] in the time of Harun al-Rashid a porter named Sinbad, a poor man who maintained himself by carrying things on his head. One day, as the heat and weight lay heavy on his back, he faltered and began to sweat under the load.

As he passed a merchant’s house, the ground before it clean and the air cool, he set his burden on a wide bench by the gate and sat to rest and taste the breeze …

* * *

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

There came from the gate a breath of scented air that fixed the porter to his seat with pleasure. From inside he heard the sounds of lutes and other strings, clear voices raised in song and recitation, and there were also birds, chattering and praising God in all the languages they knew, turtledoves and Barbary doves and blackbirds, nightingales and larks.

Marveling, his mind in ecstasy, he moved toward the music,[3] and he saw inside the house a garden, and inside the garden slaves and pages and a train of servants, the likes of which are never seen outside the courts of kings and sultans. On a drift of air came a heady smell of cooking, hinting at good things to eat and drink.

He raised his eyes to heaven and said, “Glory be to you, Lord of all things, creator and provider who provides without counting. I beg pardon for my faults and repent of all my slips, and I yield to your judgment and your will without resistance, Lord, for there is no questioning your ways and nothing is beyond your power. Glory be to you who raise up whom you wish and bring low whom you wish. There is no God but you, and oh, your sway is strong, your power great, your understanding excellent, for you have chosen among your servants a favorite, the owner of this place: Here he lives in comfort, breathing sweet air, where only fine meats touch his plate and nectar cools his throat. You have set down for each of your creatures a fate of your choosing, for some are weary, some at ease,[4] some happy, and some, like me, know nothing but labor and misery."

And he said these lines:

How many of us slave away
How many lie at ease.
The more I work and suffer—strange!
I see my cares increase.
My neighbor leads a happy life
Untroubled by my pain:
Delight and glory, food and drink
A stream of golden days.
Yet we are all made from a drop—
I am his kin, he mine
And still between us is the gap
From vinegar to wine.
But I do not accuse you, Lord—
Your ways are fair and wise.

Then he took up his load and turned to go, when out of the door came a boy with a pretty face, well made and finely dressed. He took the porter by the hand and said, "Come in and speak with my master. He calls for you." The porter, unable to refuse, left his burden at the door and followed the page into the splendid home,[5] which was both grand and warm. When they came to a great hall, he saw noblemen with flowers all around them, fragrant plants, fruit fresh and dried, fine foods and finer wine, and musical instruments in the hands of women, beautiful, enslaved.

At the far end of the hall sat a man with gravity and grace and graying hair, in an atmosphere of majesty and pride. When Sinbad saw all this, he was amazed and thought, “This place must be a part of Paradise, or else it is the palace of a sultan or a king.”

He greeted them with all the courtesy he knew, and kissed the ground before them, and stood with his head bowed …

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Then the master of the house invited him to sit. He spoke to him with kindness, and made him feel at home, and set before him plates of delicate food, each one different, each delicious. Sinbad bent his head to the feast, pronounced the name of God, and ate his fill. Then he washed his hands and thanked the company.

“You are welcome,” said the master, “and your day is blessed, but what is your name, and what do you do?”

“My name is Sinbad the Porter, and I carry people’s goods on my head for a living.”

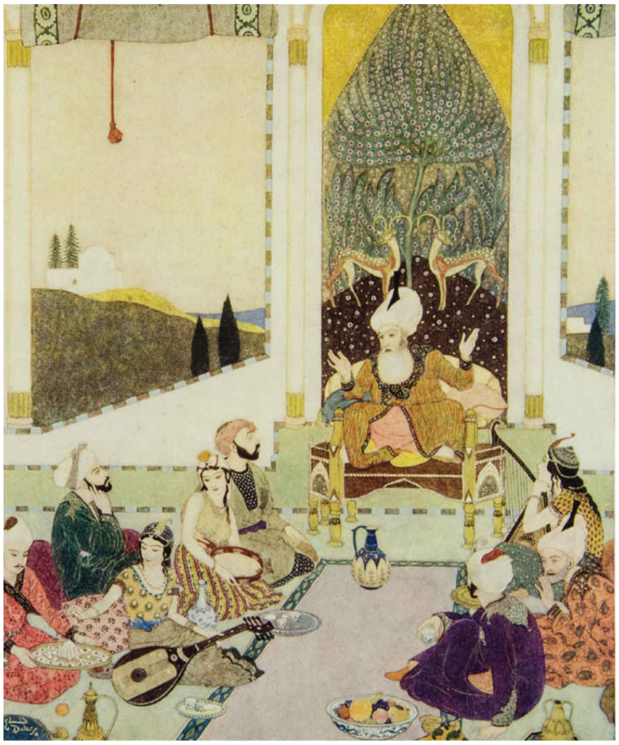
“Your name,” said the master, “is like mine. I am Sinbad the Sailor, and I would like to hear again the lines you spoke at the gate.”

The porter was ashamed and said, “Forgive me; lack of money, sleep, and leisure lead to lack of wit.”

“No shame,” replied the other man. “You are my brother now,[6] but let me hear the lines again. They pleased me when you said them at the door.”

The porter said the lines, and the master was transported.

Then the master said, “My story is a marvel. Let me tell you how I came to sit where I am now, for I was not granted this good fortune[7] and this home except after great struggle, danger and distress—oh how I suffered in the beginning! I made seven voyages, and each voyage is a tale that dizzies the mind. Everything was set down in the stars, and there is no refuge from that which is written, so listen.”

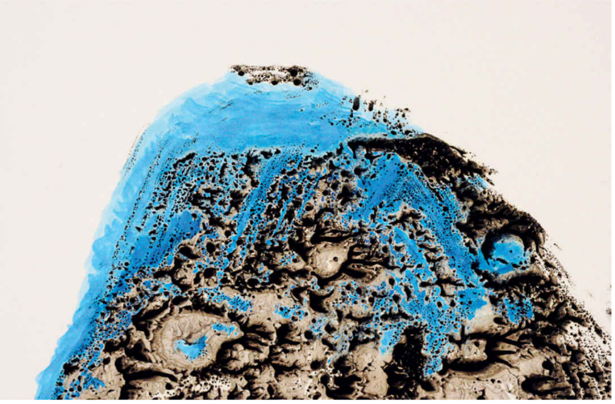


Sinbad the Sailor entertains Sinbad the Porter with stories of his voyages. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Sinbad the Sailor & Other Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1915).*

THE FIRST VOYAGE OF SINBAD

FRIENDS, my father was a merchant, among the wealthiest and finest in his trade. He died when I was a boy, leaving me his capital and property and land. When I came of age, I took it all,[8] squandered it on food and drink and lived for stylish company and clothes, believing it would last and do me good, only to wake a long time later from my folly and find that my money had melted away, my fortunes swung, and all that had been mine was gone. When I came to my senses, all shaken, I remembered a saying of our Lord Solomon, son of David, that three things are better than three others:[9] the day of death better than the day of birth, a living dog better than a dead lion, and the grave better than the palace. I sold what remained of my property and gained three thousand dirhams. And a thought grew in my mind to go abroad to other lands, and I remembered what the poet said:

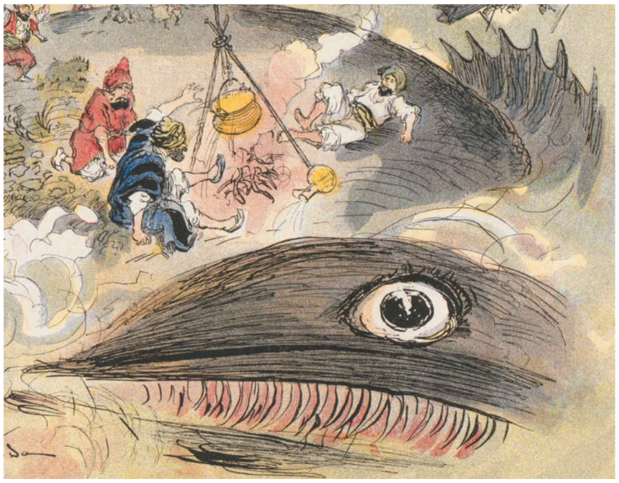
No heights were ever scaled[10]
Without a fight, no hurdle
Cleared without a restless night
To find pearls you must face
The deep, to want the peak
Without the climb is life
Wasted, asleep



Laleh Khorramian, Blue for Blood *(2006). Printed by permission of the artist.*

I resolved to travel, and I bought a stock of goods and supplies for life at sea. Then I joined a company of merchants on a boat bound for Basra,[11] and we sailed for many days and nights from island to island, sea to sea, and shore to shore. Everywhere we stopped to buy and sell and barter, until we came to an island that was like a garden of Paradise. Here the captain dropped anchor, put out the plank, and all on board stepped off and set up stoves, lit fires, and divided up their tasks, some cooking and some washing, some exploring. I was among the explorers.

Just when the company had gathered to eat and drink and play, from the ship the captain cried out, “Sailors, save yourselves! Back to the boat! Leave everything and run, for this island where you stand is not an island[12] but a great fish stranded in the middle of the sea that time has carpeted so thick with sand and trees that it is like an island. When you lit your fires, it felt the heat and moved. It will soon take you down into the sea, and you will all be drowned, so leave your things and save yourselves before you die!”



“The island shook and sank into the deep.” Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

At the captain’s warning, we fled back to the boat, abandoning ashore our stoves and pots and all we had. Some made it to the boat and some did not.

The island shook and sank into the deep with all it held, the roaring waves closed over it, and I was left behind and went down with the drowned. But God put in my path a wooden pail[13] my fellow men had used for washing. I caught hold of it and climbed aboard, and I paddled with my feet against the waves that pitched me left and right. The captain spread the sails and went on his way with those who were saved, without a thought for the drowning.

My eyes stayed on the ship until it disappeared from view, and by dark I knew that I was doomed. This was my state for a night and a day, until the wind and waves cast me by an island with trees hanging over the water, and from the verge of death I caught a branch and climbed it to the shore. There I found my feet were numb and fish had nibbled at their soles, which my distress had hidden from my notice until now.

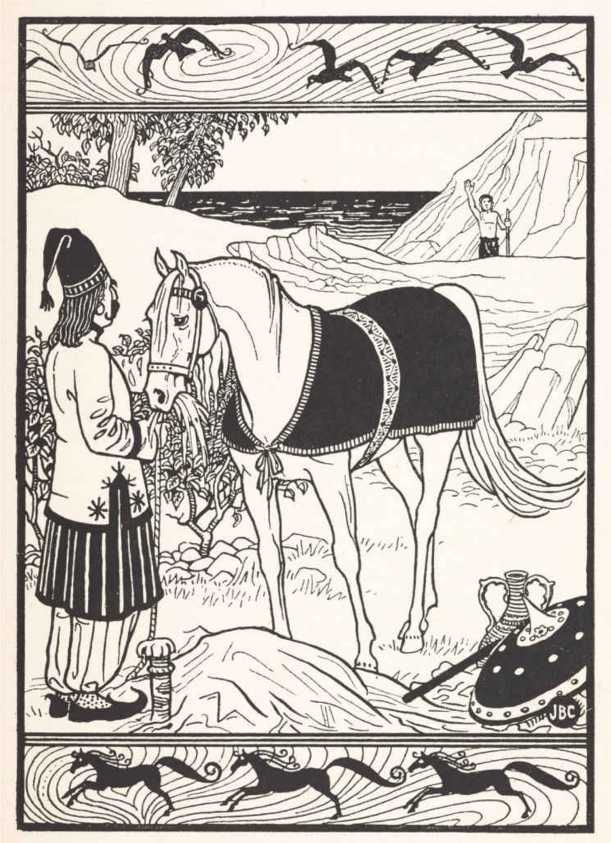
Like the dead, I fell to the ground and sank into a daze until sunup, and I woke to find my feet had swollen, my mood sunk. Yet I began to move,[14] now on my belly, now on my knees, and on the island I found many fruits and springs of water. I lived on the fruit for days and nights until I was stronger, myself again and moving faster, taking in the trees and all God had created, and from one of the trees I made a crutch.

So I lived until one day, on a walk along the shore I saw a shape, far and vague, which I took for a wild beast or a creature of the sea. And as I drew near, never losing it from sight, I saw that it was a mare tied to the shore, dazzling to see. But when I moved toward her, she cried out, and as I turned away in fright, a man emerged from underground, called after me, and said, “Who are you? Where are you from? What brings you to this place?”

“Friend,” I said, “I am a shipwrecked man, a stranger, but God supplied me with a wooden pail that carried me upon the waves and cast me on this island.”

“Come,” he said, and he took me by the hand into a vault beneath the earth, then into a large chamber, and sat me down at the far end and brought me food. I ate hungrily until I was content, then he asked about my life and I told him the whole thing from start to end. Then I said, “Forgive me, friend, I have told you the truth, and now I would like you to tell me who you are, and why you live here in this sunken room, and why that mare is tethered on the shore.”

He said, “I am one of several scattered on this island, the grooms of King Mihrajan, in charge of all the horses. Every month at the new moon, we bring out the best mares, tie them to the shore, and hide ourselves under the earth unseen. Then the stallions of the sea emerge,[15] drawn out by the mares’ scent, and mount them. When the horse is done, he tries to take her with him but cannot break the tether, so he cries out at her and falls on her with head and hooves. He cries so loud that we hear him and rush out, frightening him back into the sea, then the mare conceives and bears a foal worth a fortune, unlike anything on earth. Now is the time when the stallions come….”



Sinbad meets the grooms of King Mihrajan. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark, from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(London, 1896). This volume of stories draws on the translations of Edward Lane and Jonathan Scott and its illustrators, Clark and his friend and frequent collaborator William Strang, create a distinctive Chinese box structure of images.*

* * *

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"I will take you[16] to meet King Mihrajan," he said, "and show you our country. Had you not met us, you would have found no one else on this island. You would have died in anguish, and no one would have known of your existence. But I will save your life and return you to your land."

I blessed him and thanked him for his kindness, and as we were talking, a stallion came out of the sea, gave a great cry, and leapt on the mare. When he was done, he tried to take her with him, but as she kicked and shouted, he could not. Then the groom took up a sword and shield and ran out, calling to his companions, "To the horse!" sounding the sword on the shield. The company emerged in a clamor of spears, and the stallion was startled, plunged into the sea like a buffalo, and disappeared.

The groom sat down to rest with his companions, each leading a mare. When they saw me, they asked me who I was, and I told them my story. They came near, spread the cloth for their meal, ate, and shared with me their food, then they took me on their mares to the city of King Mihrajan.[17]

They went in to see him and told him of my case, and he sent for me and welcomed me and asked about my story. I told him everything from start to end, and he marveled and said, "Son, your life must be a long one, or you would never have escaped these straits, but God be praised that you are safe." And he seated me beside him and was kind.

He made me his agent to the port, and had me keep a log of all the ships that landed. I stood by his side to conduct his affairs, and he rewarded me in every way and gave me handsome clothes to wear. I became important, a middleman between the people and the king, and stayed with him a long time.

But every time I went down to the port, I asked the travelers and merchants to point me to Baghdad, hoping for a thread to follow home. But no one knew how to get there, or knew anyone going that way. I was disappointed, tired of being a stranger, and remained in this state for some time.

One day, I went to see King Mihrajan and found him with a company of Indians. I wished them peace and they returned my wish and asked about my country, and I asked about theirs. They told me they belonged to different castes.[18] Among them were Kshatriyas, who are the noblest of their castes and oppress no one, nor ever resort to force, and others were Brahmins, who never touch wine but live for pleasure, beauty, and delight, and breed horses and cattle. They told me that the people of India make up seventy-two castes, and I was amazed.

Among the lands in Mihrajan's dominion was an island called Kabil,[19] where the beat of drums and tambourines is heard all night and where the people are reported to be wise. I saw in the sea a fish two hundred cubits long,[20] and I saw fish with faces like the faces of owls. I saw on that voyage many strange and wondrous things, too many to recount.

I went on like this, exploring everything the islands held, until one day, as I stood on the shore, staff in hand, I saw a ship approach with many merchants aboard. When it reached the port, the captain furled the sails, put out the plank, and his men brought the contents of the ship to shore as I stood writing their account. Then I said to the captain, "Anything else?"

"Yes," he said, "there are some goods left in the hold, but their owner drowned at one of the islands on our way…."

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And Shahrazad agreed.

The captain added, "We will sell them[21] and bring the money back to his people in Baghdad, the House of Peace."

"What was the merchant's name?"

"His name was Sinbad," said the captain, "drowned at sea."

At these words, I looked at him again and recognized his face, and cried out, “Captain, I am Sinbad! I was among the drowned, but God came to my rescue with a wooden pail the sailors used for washing, and I rode it on the water and paddled with my feet. The wind and waves brought me to this island, where I met the grooms of King Mihrajan, who took me to the king himself and I told him my whole story, and he made me his agent at the port and repaid me for my service. The goods in your charge are mine.”

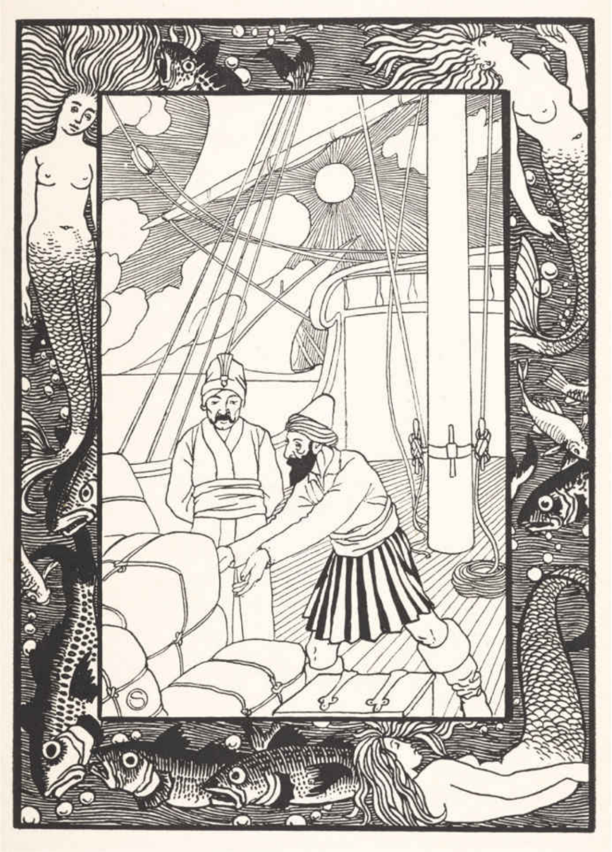
“There is no power,” said the captain, “and no strength except in God, and no trust or conscience among men.”

“Why do you say this,” I said, “after hearing my story?”

“Because you heard me say that I have goods without an owner, you want to take them without right, and that is shameful. We saw him drown with our own eyes. He was with many others and none of them were saved. How can you claim to be the owner?”

I said, “Listen to my story[22] and try to understand, and you will see I tell the truth. Lying is the mark of liars.”[23]

Then I listed everything I had with me from when I left Baghdad until we reached the island where we fell into the sea. I reminded him of certain things that passed between us, then the captain and his men were sure that I had told the truth and recognized me. Thrilled that I was safe, they said, “We never thought that you escaped, but God has granted you new life.”



Sinbad sees his name written on his goods. Illustration by Scottish painter and printmaker William Strang from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

They gave me my goods, and I saw my name written on them and none of them missing. I unwrapped from them some fine and precious thing to give King Mihrajan, and I told him I had found the ship I sailed aboard and all my property intact.

The king was astonished. It was clear to him that what I said was true, and his love for me grew deeper. He treated me more sweetly than before, and in thanks for my gift, he gave me many more. Then I sold all my goods for a great price,[24] which I exchanged for products from the king's city, and when the men were ready, I loaded all my things onto the ship and went to see the king. I thanked him for his charity and care and asked for his permission to go home. He wished me well and gave me many island delicacies for the voyage.

I said good-bye and we set sail, blown along by the grace of God, with luck at our backs and fate on our side. We journeyed day and night until we came to Basra, where I stayed for a short while, elated at my safe return, then onward to Baghdad, the House of Peace, with my store of fine and precious things. I went to my quarter and entered my house, and all my friends and family came to see me. I acquired slaves and servants in great numbers, and bought more property and land. I spent more time with those I loved than I had ever done, forgot the strangeness and the danger of my trip,[25] and did nothing but seek pleasure and delight. This was my first voyage, and tomorrow, God willing, I shall tell you the story of the second.

* * *

Sinbad the Sailor dined with Sinbad the Porter, gave him a hundred pieces of gold, and said, “Your company has brightened our day.” The porter thanked him, took his gift, and went his way, lost in wonder at the turns a life can take. He spent the night at home, and in the morning he returned to the house of Sinbad the Sailor, who greeted him with the same kindness and invited him to sit. When the other friends arrived, he served them food and drink, and when pleasure had washed over them, he spoke …

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The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE SECOND VOYAGE OF SINBAD[26]

Friends, my life was one of unalloyed delight until a thought grew in my mind to go abroad, a longing in my soul[27] to cross the sea and trade and turn a profit. I spent a fortune on supplies, packed them up, and went down to the shore. There I found a fine new ship,[28] with sails of good cloth and a large crew aboard, and I loaded my things on it along with other merchants. We set out to sea the same day and sailed with the weather our friend from sea to sea, island to island. Wherever we stopped, we met traders and leaders, buyers and sellers, and we bought and sold and bartered.

We went on like this until the winds of fortune brought us to an island thick with trees, sweet fruit and sweeter flowers, singing birds and sighing streams, but not a single breathing soul. The captain moored us at the shore and we stepped off, taking in the trees and birds and praising God, and wondering at His works. By a spring of water in the trees, I found a place to sit, and there I ate what God had portioned out for me. Lazy in the scented air, I drifted into sleep.

When I awoke, I could not find a soul, no merchants and no crew, though I searched the island right and left. The ship had sailed without me.[29] Grief came over me, then rage, until I felt my heart would break, for I had nothing of this world, no food or drink or friend, and I despaired of life itself.

At last, unable to sit still, I rose and walked about, and climbed a towering tree and from the top looked all around—nothing in my sight but sky and sea and trees and birds and sand. But as I went on looking, a large white shape appeared far off, so I came down and walked until I reached it: a large white dome, tall as it was wide. Circling it, I found in it no door and in myself neither the strength nor the agility to climb it, for it was very smooth.

I marked the spot and walked around the dome to measure it, counting fifty paces. As I stood there searching for a ruse to get inside, the sun was dipping, night was near, and all at once the day was gone. Dark surrounded me as if a cloud concealed the sun (it being summer, I was surprised) and, looking up, I saw a mighty pair of wings, a bird of enormous size, slicing the air and clouding the sun. In my surprise, I remembered a story …

* * *

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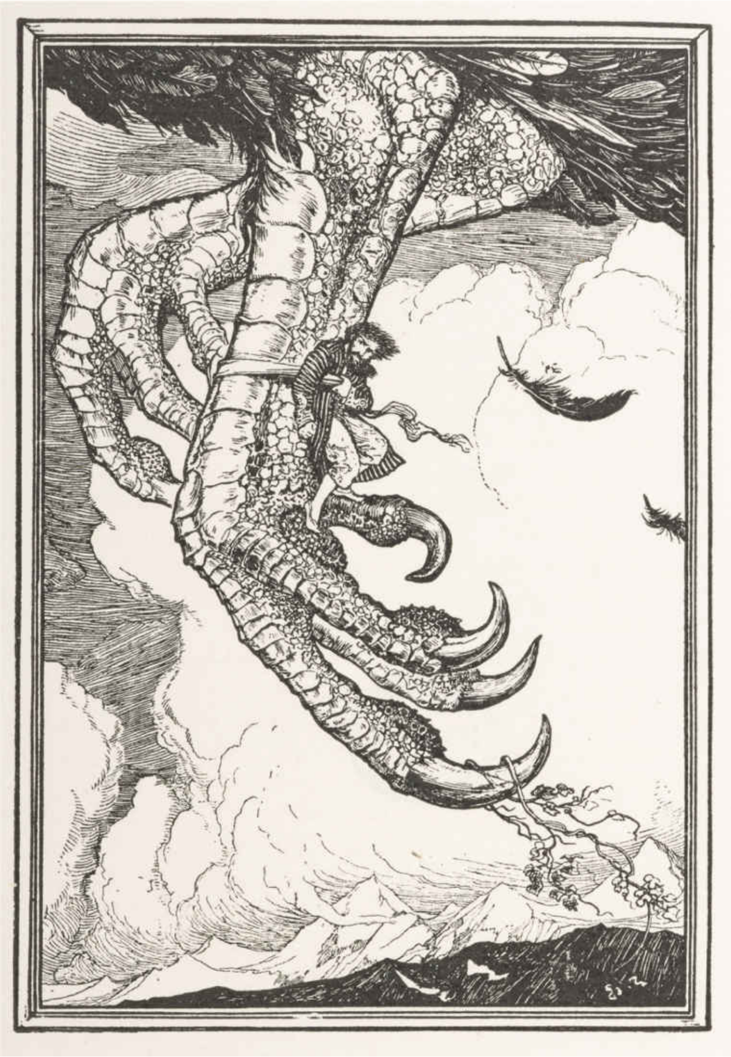
I once heard from travelers that there is on certain islands a huge bird called the rukh,[30] which feeds its young with elephants. All at once, I knew the dome I saw was one of the rukh’s eggs, and I was lost in wonder at the works of God.

Then the bird alighted on the egg, screened it with a wing, stretched its legs behind, and fell asleep (Glory to the sleepless one!). I unfurled my turban, braided it to form a rope, wound it tight around my waist, and tied it fast to the bird’s feet, thinking it would carry me to settled life, and that anywhere was better than this island.



The rukh bird lifts Sinbad into the air. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

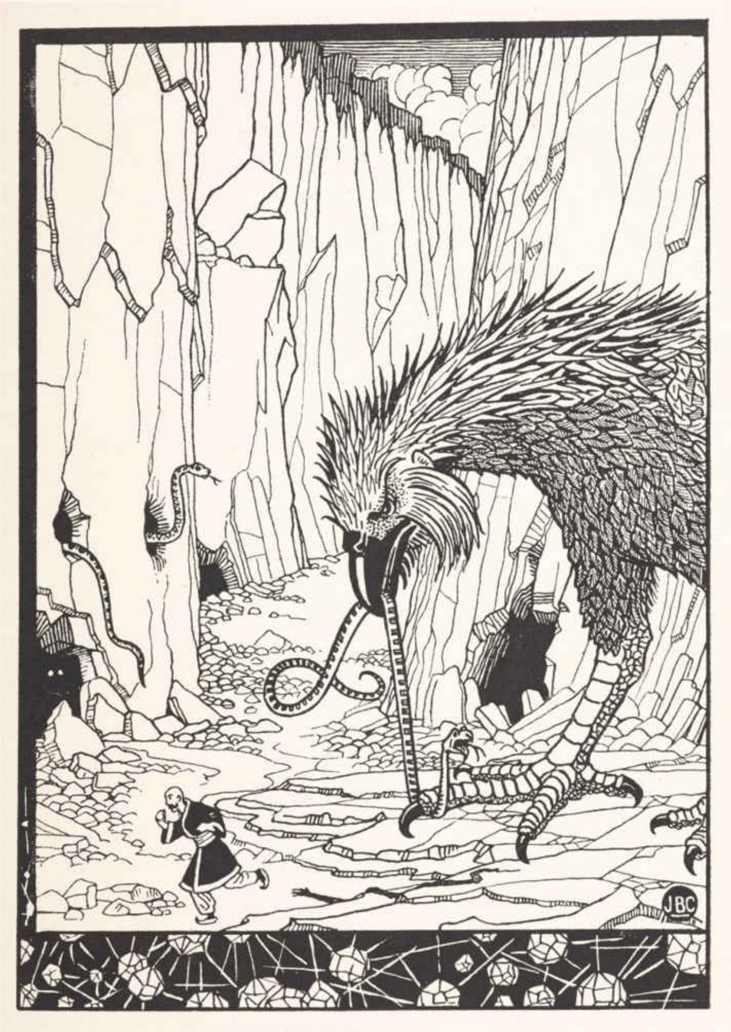
I did not sleep that night, fearing that the bird would fly while I was unaware. When dawn broke and light returned, the bird rose from its egg and lifted us with shrieks into the air, and flew so high I thought we met the edge of heaven. Then it circled down to earth and found a perch on a high place. Back on solid ground, I hurried to unbind myself and loosed my turban from the creature’s feet, shaking with fear. Between its claws I saw it snatch up something from the soil, a serpent, and carry it toward the sea as I looked on in amazement.

Walking on, I found myself above a valley wide and deep, ringed by mountains so high their peaks could not be seen or scaled. I blamed myself and thought, “If only I had stayed put on the island, for that was better than these wastes, and there was fruit to eat and water, while nothing grows on this rock face, a treeless, streamless place. But there is no power and no strength except in God; every time I am delivered from one danger, I fall into worse.”

Then I rose and walked into the valley and discovered that its soil was made of diamonds,[31] the stone used to cut gems, porcelain, and onyx and cannot itself be cut except with lead. I found the valley swarmed with snakes and serpents, long as palms, and so large that should an elephant come near, a single snake could swallow it. They came out at night and hid during the day for fear the rukh or eagles would carry them away and cut them up.

I stood in the valley, considering that I had hastened my own doom, but at day’s end I searched the valley for a place to spend the night. Terrified of serpents, I forgot my thirst and hunger and thought only of preserving my own life.

Soon I saw a cave nearby, slipped in, slid a heavy stone across the mouth, and told myself I would be safe that night. In the morning, I would go and see what fate would do, but when I turned to look inside, I saw a snake, huge and asleep on its eggs at the back of the cave. Shaking with fear, I raised my eyes to heaven and gave in to what had been set down for me. No sleep all night, and when dawn broke, I pushed away the stone that sealed the cave and staggered out like a drunk man, dizzy with hunger and sleeplessness and fear.



The Valley of the Diamonds. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

As I walked along the valley, there fell in my path a sudden pile of meat. No one else was near and I was thinking, “Strange,” then a story came to mind that I had heard from travelers and traders.[32] The diamond mountains are too dangerous to scale, and the diamond merchants have a trick to mine the stones: They take a sheep and kill it, skin it and quarter it, and throw the quarters from the mountaintops into the valley. All the diamonds cling to the fresh meat where it falls, and at noon the vultures swoop down on the meat and carry it back up. Then the merchants come and shout to scare the birds away, and they pick out the precious stones and leave the meat to the birds. Nor can diamonds be obtained except by this device …

* * *

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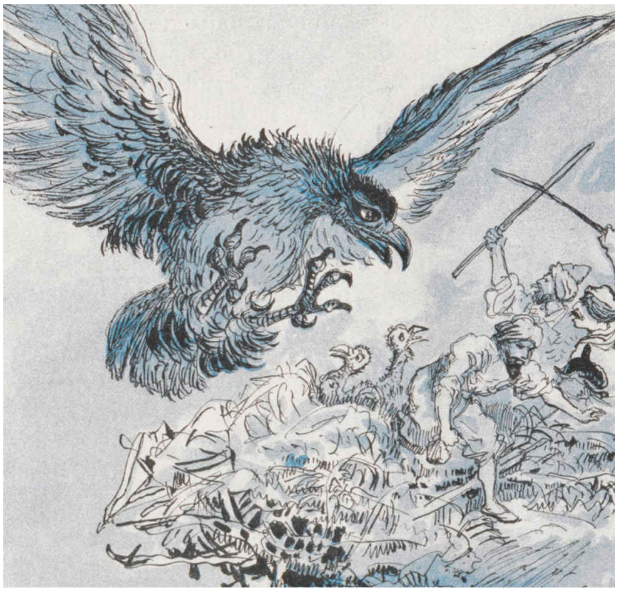
When I saw the carcass and recalled this story, I took the diamonds from the meat and crammed my pockets[33] with them by the palmful. I filled my belt and turban and the folds of my clothes, and when another quarter of lamb fell before me, I bound myself to it and lay on my back with the meat on my chest. Soon an eagle came, drove its claws into the flesh, and took it flying through the air as I held on. It dropped the meat on the peak and was on the point of tearing off a piece when a clamor and a clattering of wood rose up behind, and the bird flew off in fright.



The merchant scares off the eagle. Detail from illustration by Albert Robida, from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

I released myself from the dead sheep, my clothes stained with its blood, and saw the merchant who had scared off the eagle. He started at my sight, and when he neared the meat and found it bare, he howled and prayed to God and begged to be delivered from the devil. Striking his palms together, he wondered aloud how this had come about.

I approached him, and he said, “Who are you, and what brings you here?”

“Have no fear,” I said, “I am a man, a good one, and a merchant.[34] My story is a marvel, and the reason for my presence in this valley will amaze you. Do not worry, I will give you what you want: I have with me a wealth of diamonds, each one better than what you would have got, and you will have enough to make you happy.”

He thanked and blessed me,[35] and we began to talk. When the other merchants (each of whom had hurled a hunk of meat) heard me talking to their friend, they came to meet me, gave thanks for my safety, and took me with them. I told them my whole story, how I suffered and the reason for my presence in the valley, then I gave a quantity of diamonds to the merchant on whose carcass I had traveled. He was very pleased, and he said that nobody before me had made it to this place and out. I gave thanks for my deliverance from the valley of serpents and for my safe return to human company.

When it was morning, we moved along the ridge of the high mountain, a wilderness of snakes beneath us. We reached an area with a grove of camphor trees,[36] each of which might have supplied a hundred men with shade. A person wishing to draw camphor has only to pierce the upper bark with a long rod and catch what falls. This is liquid camphor, the honey of that tree, which flows and later sets like gum. Later the tree dries and becomes firewood.

On this island, too, was a species of wild beast called karkadann,[37] which grazes just as buffalo and cows do in our lands. Being larger than a camel, it feeds also on the leaves of trees. It is a creature of enormous size, with a single thick horn in the middle of the head, a cubit long, and in the horn there is a human shape.[38]

From the lips of sailors and those who like to roam about the mountains and the land, we know the animal named karkadann will carry a great elephant upon its horn and uses it to graze around the island and the shores, but does not feel its weight. The elephant dies on the horn, and its fat, melting in the sun, leaks along the karkadann’s head into its eyes and blinds it. It lies down by the shore, then the rukh comes and carries it, together with the elephant, to feed its young. And I saw on that island great varieties of buffalo unlike any I had seen at home.

In my pockets I had the many diamonds I had gathered in the valley, which I bartered for goods and gold and silver. I journeyed with the merchants from valley to valley, town to town, delighting in the works of God, buying and selling until we reached Basra,[39] where I stayed a few days and then went on to Baghdad….

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When I made it home, heavy with money and diamonds and goods, I gathered my friends and relatives and made gifts to them all. Then I gave myself to food and drink and cheerful things, surrounded by the ones I loved, and forgot what I had suffered. I lived a life of pleasure and delight, and all who heard of my return came to me to ask what I had seen. I amazed them with my tales of hardship, and they marveled at my safety and gave thanks. This was my second voyage, and tomorrow, if God wills it, I will tell you the third.

* * *

When Sinbad the Sailor had told his story to Sinbad the Porter, he fed him and gave him one hundred pieces of gold, which the porter took home, blessing the sailor, bewildered by what he had survived.[40] In the morning, when it was light, the porter rose, returned to Sinbad’s house, and sat with him until the other guests arrived. When they all were fed and watered, glad and merry, Sinbad the Sailor began his story …

THE THIRD VOYAGE OF SINBAD

FRIENDS, the tale of my third voyage is even stranger than the last,[41] and God in his wisdom knows best what is hidden.

After my second voyage, I lived an easy life of peace and pure delight with the money I obtained as I have told you, God's amends for what I had lost. I was happy in Baghdad until my soul began to stir with longing for the sea, the open road, the call of trade and profit (the soul bends to bad things),[42] and I resolved to go, acquired a quantity of goods for life at sea, and packed them up. I journeyed with them from Baghdad to Basra, where at the port I found a ship, large and full of merchants who seemed to be decent, men of belief and honor.[43] We set out together, guided by God's favor, hoping for safe haven at the end of our exploring, and sailed without relief from sea to sea, island to island, town to town. Everywhere we stopped to buy and sell, eyes hungry and hearts still.

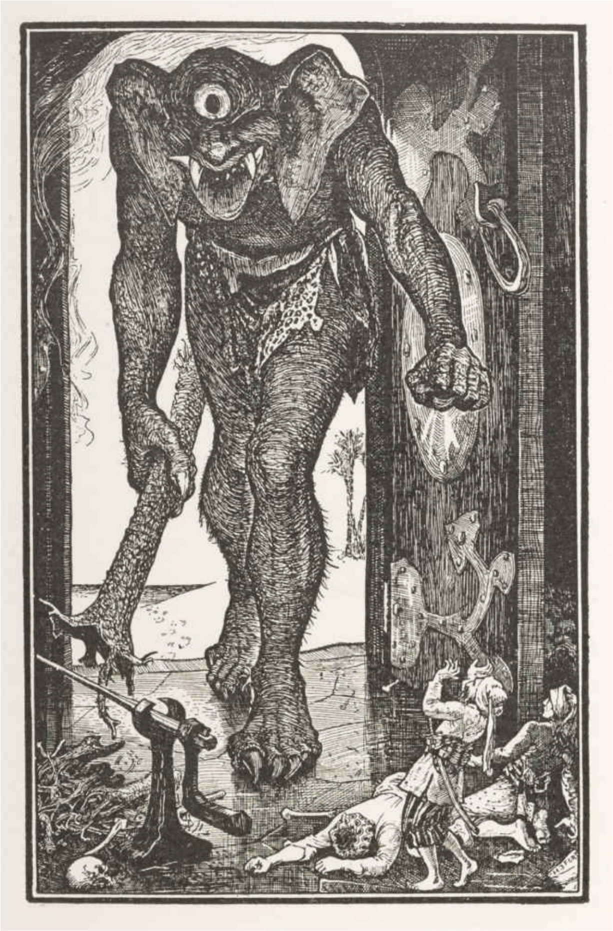
One day we found ourselves amid a wild and angry sea, the captain standing at the bow to scan the waves. All at once, he slapped his face, furled the sails, and cast the anchor, tearing at his beard and clothes and crying. "Captain," we said, "what is it?"

"Friends," he said, "peace on your souls! The wind has turned against us and forced us into open water, and bad fortune brought us to the Mountain of the Apes.[44] Nobody has ever come here and survived." And I knew in my heart we would all die.

The captain had not finished speaking when the apes arrived, circled the ship on all sides, and spread like locusts on the deck and on the shore. We feared that if we killed or chased away a single one, they would kill us because they were many (numbers are stronger than courage), and we also feared that they would plunder our supplies. They are frightening to see, and no one understands a word they say, for they are wild and shy, black-furred and yellow-eyed and short, no longer than four spans. They climbed the anchor cables and slit them with their teeth, and they cut all the ropes, and the listing ship was tossed toward their mountain and thrown along the shore. They took out the men who were on board, left us on the land, and took the ship with all it held and disappeared.

We remained on the island, feeding on its fruit and sipping from its streams. One day, we spotted a great house in the distance, and we walked until we found it: a pavilion of high walls and solid build, its ebony gate wide open. On entering, we found a wide enclosure like a courtyard, with many doors around it. At the far end was a high and heavy bench on which were stoves and cooking pots, and around the bench lay many scattered bones. But we saw no one and were full of questions.

Then we sat down and fell asleep from noon to night, when suddenly the earth shook under us, there was a rumble in the air, and from the upper floors we saw descend a figure of enormous size in the likeness of a man,[45] dark and tall as a palm, eyes like burning torches, teeth like tusks, a mouth like a well, nails like lion claws. At the sight of him, we fainted, and were as dead men in alarm and dread …



“We saw descend a figure of enormous size.” This illustration by H. J. Ford adopts the conventional assumption that the giant in this tale is equivalent to the Cyclops encountered by Odysseus (despite indications in the text that he has two eyes). Illustration from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

* * *

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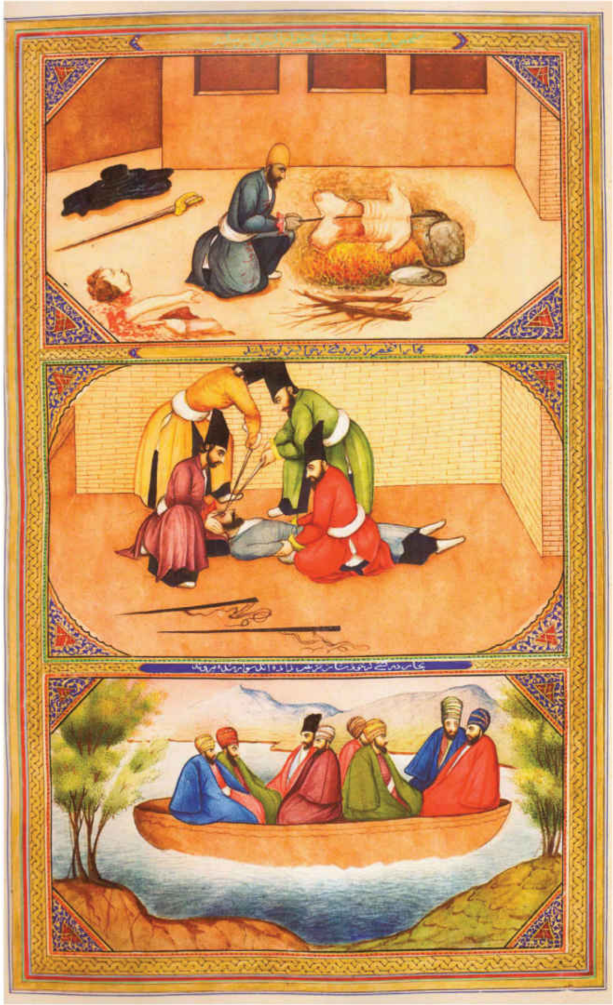
The giant sat on the bench for a while, then rose and came to us. He picked me out from among my fellows, seized my hand, raised me off the ground, and turned me over. I was in his fingers like a morsel, and he felt me as a butcher feels a sheep he wants to slaughter. But finding me feeble, lean with trouble, underfed, he set me down and picked up one of my companions, turned and prodded him as he had done to me, then let him go. He felt us one by one,[46] until he came to the captain of our ship, who was a meaty man with brawn and belly and broad shoulders. He liked the look of him, took him as the butcher grips the creature he will slaughter, and threw him to the ground and cracked his neck under his foot.

Fetching a long spit, he sent it down the captain's throat until it came out from his rear. Then he lit a fire and set over it the spit that held the captain, turning it over the coals until the flesh was cooked. Off the fire, he jointed it the way one joints a chicken, and tore at the flesh with his nails and wolfed it down. He ate until nothing remained of the captain but bones, which he threw to the side.

He sat down on the bench and drifted off, snoring like a slaughtered sheep or cow, and in the morning, he went on his way. When we were sure that he was gone, we turned to each other and wept for our souls, and said, "If only we had drowned or been eaten by apes, it would be better than the roasting of a person over coals, horrific death. But what God wills must come to pass—there is no power and no strength except in God! We will die in sorrow, and nobody will know, for there is no escaping where we are."

We rose and walked about the island looking for a place to hide, feeling we would rather die than roast over fire, but we found no hiding spot. As evening overtook us, we returned to the pavilion in fear. There we sat, when soon the earth began to shake and the figure came among us, turned us over one by one as he had done before. He prodded us until he met with one he liked, took hold of him, and did with him what he did to the captain, roasted him and ate him on the bench, then slept all night, snoring like a slaughtered beast. In the morning, he rose and left as he had done before.

We said to one another that to throw ourselves into the sea and drown is better than to die in fire, abominable death.[47] Then one of us said, "Listen, let us find a ruse to kill him and be free, and free the Muslims from his cruelty."



The Golestan Palace Library manuscript of the 1843 Persian translation of the Nights, *illustrated by painter and miniaturist Sani' al-Molk and his studio. Top: The monster roasts the captain over a fire. Middle: The sailors blind the cannibal with iron spits. Below: Sinbad and company flee by sea. Note that in these Iranian illustrations, the giant is not a Cyclops. Image courtesy of Ulrich Marzolph.*

"If we must kill him," I said, "let us take these planks and firewood[48] and build ourselves a raft. When we have contrived to kill him, we'll embark and let the sea transport us where God wishes, and we will float until a passing ship picks us up. If we fail to kill him, we can still embark and go to sea, and if we drown, we shall be saved from roasting over fire. If we escape, we escape; if we drown, we die as martyrs."

"This plan is good," they said, and we agreed to it and began. We carried some wood outside and made a raft, tied it to the shore, and stowed some food on it. Then we went back to the pavilion. When evening came, the earth trembled around us and the figure was among us like a biting dog. He turned and felt us one by one, selected one of us, and did to him what he had done to those before …

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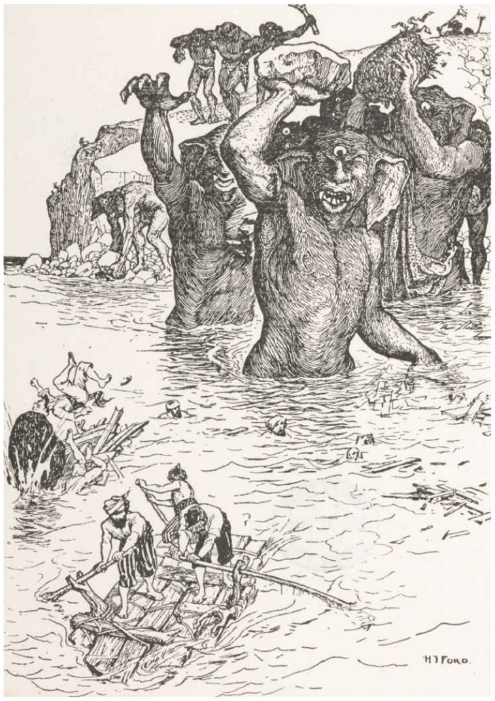
Having eaten the man, he slept, snoring like thunder. We rose, took up two iron spits,[49] and put them in the fire until they were red as burning coals. Gripping them, we went to the creature, who lay asleep and snoring, and we pushed the spits into his eyes with all our strength and drove them deep into his eyes as he slept.

He let out a cry that terrified our hearts, then he rose from the bench to come after us as we ran from him left and right. For though he was now blind and could not see us, we were afraid and gave up hope of life or ever being safe.

He found the door by feeling, his howls shaking the earth and our hearts, and we followed him out as he kept up his search, but he returned with a female, larger and wilder. When we saw that his mate was more horrible than he, we were as scared as it is possible to be, and we hurried to untie the raft we had made and put to sea, while the two creatures pelted us with rocks until the greater number of us died except for three, two others and me …



“The two creatures pelted us with rocks until the greater number of us died.” Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

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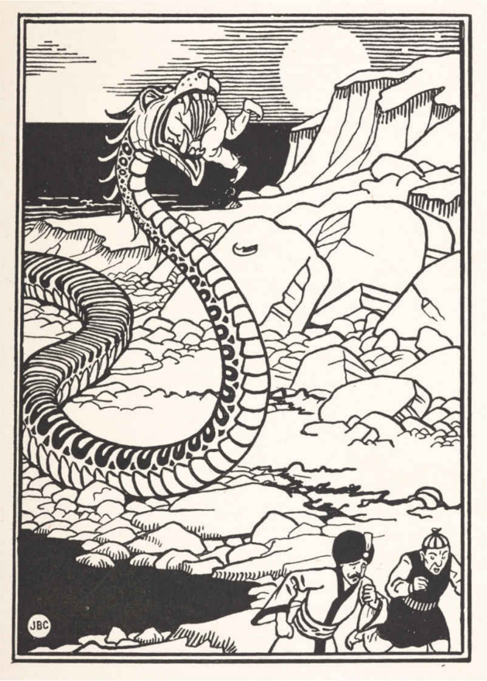
The raft conveyed us to another island, where we walked until the close of day, and when night gained on us, we slept. Soon we were woken by a serpent[50] with a long body and large belly, which circled us, chose one to approach and swallowed him to his shoulders, then swallowed the rest of him. We heard his ribs break inside its belly.

Then the serpent went on its way, and we were shocked and grieving for our friend. “Strange,” we said. “Every death we see is viler than the last. We rejoiced at our escape, but our joy was not to last, for we evaded drowning and the creatures, but how shall we escape this dreadful beast?”

We walked about the island, eating fruit and sipping from its streams. When evening came, we found a tall and sturdy tree, scaled it, and fell asleep, I having ascended to the highest bough. And when night fell, the serpent came and, looking right and left, slid up the tree where we lay sleeping, found my friend, and took his head into its throat. It wound itself around the tree with him (I heard his bones break in its belly) and it swallowed him entire as I looked on. Then it slid away down the tree, and I remained among the boughs all night.



“It swallowed him entirely as I looked on.” Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark, from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

When day came and light appeared, I climbed down like a dead man, stiff with fear, and wanted to throw myself into the sea and be at rest, but I could not, for life is dear. Instead, I tied a piece of wood crosswise to my feet, and tied one to my right side and one to my left, one across my chest, and tied one crosswise to my head. I was enclosed by wood, and I bound the pieces fast and threw myself to earth and fell asleep within the wood as in a chamber.

When night fell, the serpent came as usual, made for me but could not swallow me with the wood on every side. It circled me as I looked on with dead man's eyes, but it could not get at me. Then it turned away and tried again, and every time it tried to swallow me, it met the wood that caged me round on every side, though it did not give up from sunset until dawn.

When day broke and light appeared and the sun rose, the serpent went on its way, enraged. I put out my hand and set myself loose from my wooden chamber, feeling close to death from what the serpent had put me through. Then I walked along the island to its tip, and as I cast an eye toward the sea, I saw a ship far off, and from a tree I pulled a branch and made a sign with it and called out to the crew. When they saw me, they said, "We must see what this is. Perhaps it is a man." They approached and heard my cries and came to me, took me with them in the ship, and asked about my state. I told them my whole story, start to end, with all I had suffered, and they were amazed.

They gave me their own clothes, and gave me food until I was content, and cool sweet water. My heart revived, my soul relaxed, and I became at ease: God (whose name be praised) had raised me from the dead, and I thanked him for his favor, now that I was bolder where before I had been sure of doom. It seemed to me that all I had lived had been a dream. We were blown along by the wind and God's grace until we came to an island called Salahita, and there the captain docked …

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All the merchants went ashore, then the captain turned to me and said, "You are unlucky and have suffered many horrors. I would like to help you find your home so that you pray for me."

“You have my prayers,” I said.

“We had with us,” he said, “a man who went missing. We do not know whether he lives or not, as he has left no trace, and I would like to give you his effects. You will sell them on this island, we will pay you for your trouble and your service, and when we reach Baghdad, we will find his family and give them the money from the sale. Will you take the goods and sell them on the island?”

“I will,” I said, and prayed for him and thanked him. Then he had the sailors bring the goods out to the island and deliver them to me.

“Master,” said the clerk, “what are those goods the men are bringing out, and in which merchant’s name should they be marked?”

“Mark them,” said the captain, “in the name of Sinbad, who was with us on that island and who drowned without a trace. This stranger will sell them, we will give him something for his pains, and take the rest back to Baghdad. If we find Sinbad, we will give it to him, and if we do not, to his family.”

“Very well,” said the clerk.

When I heard the captain’s words, I thought, “I am that Sinbad!”[51] And I took heart and waited patiently until the merchants talked among themselves. I approached the captain and said, “Master, what do you know about the owner of those goods?”

“I know nothing,” he said, “except that he was from Baghdad and went by Sinbad the Sailor. We cast anchor at one of the islands where he was lost, and we never heard of him again.”

“Master,” I shouted, “I am Sinbad! When you dropped anchor at that island, I landed with the others, and I took with me something to eat and sat down for my leisure. Then I drifted off and drowned in sleep….”

And I told them the whole story, and when the merchants heard my words, they gathered around me, some believing, others not. When one heard me talk of the Valley of the Diamonds, he came to me and said to his fellows, “Listen, when I told you of the strange things I had seen on my travels, how we used to throw dead sheep into a valley to catch diamonds, and how I found a man attached to mine, you did not believe me and called me a liar.”

“Yes,” they said, “you did tell us, and we did not believe you.”

The merchant said, “This is the man I found tied to my sheep. He gave me diamonds without price and kept me company to Basra, where we parted and he went back to his city, we to ours. He told us that his name was Sinbad the Sailor, and he told us how the ship had sailed while he was on the island. All those goods are his. He told us of them when we met, and it is clear he tells the truth.”[52]

At these words, the captain stared at me and said, “What mark is on your bales?” I described the mark, and when I told him of a matter that had passed between us when we were at Basra, he knew that I was Sinbad and embraced me, and gave thanks for my safety. He said, “Your story is extraordinary. God be praised for bringing us together, and you back to your property….”

* * *

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Then I sold my goods for a great profit, pleased and proud to have regained my safety and my wealth. We bought and sold until we came to Sind, where we bought and sold some more, and where in the sea I saw many strange and curious things,[53] among them a fish in a cow’s form and something donkey-shaped. And I saw a bird that comes out of a shell, lays its eggs on the face of the water, and never touches land.

We journeyed without cease with God’s grace at our backs and a fair wind until we came to Basra, where I stayed for a short time and then moved on to Baghdad. I made it to my quarter, then my house, and found my family and friends, elated to be reunited with my city, home, and family. I gave alms and clothed the widows and orphans,[54] then I gathered my beloveds and sat to eat and drink and play. I forgot my cares and all that I had suffered on my voyage, where I gained that which cannot be numbered, and if you come to me tomorrow, I will tell you the story of my fourth voyage, stranger than the last.

* * *

THEN SINBAD THE SAILOR gave Sinbad the Porter a hundred coins of gold,[55] as was his custom, and had the table spread and fed his guests. The porter took the money and went home, astonished by the story he had heard, and slept. In the morning, when the light returned, he prayed and made his way to the house of Sinbad the Sailor, who greeted him with gladness and sat with him until the guests arrived. When the food was served, they ate and drank and took their ease, then he began to speak …

THE FOURTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD

KNOW, FRIENDS, that when I found myself at leisure in Baghdad among the ones I loved, my life was cream and peaches. I forgot the trouble I had seen, and fairly drowned in pleasure and the company of friends. My days could not have been sweeter, but my bad soul whispered that we should go across the sea,[56] and a desire grew in me for other faces and for trade and profit. I resolved to do it. I bought a quantity of precious goods to take to sea, and took with me more bales than was my custom. Then I journeyed from Baghdad to Basra, where I joined a company of merchants on a ship.

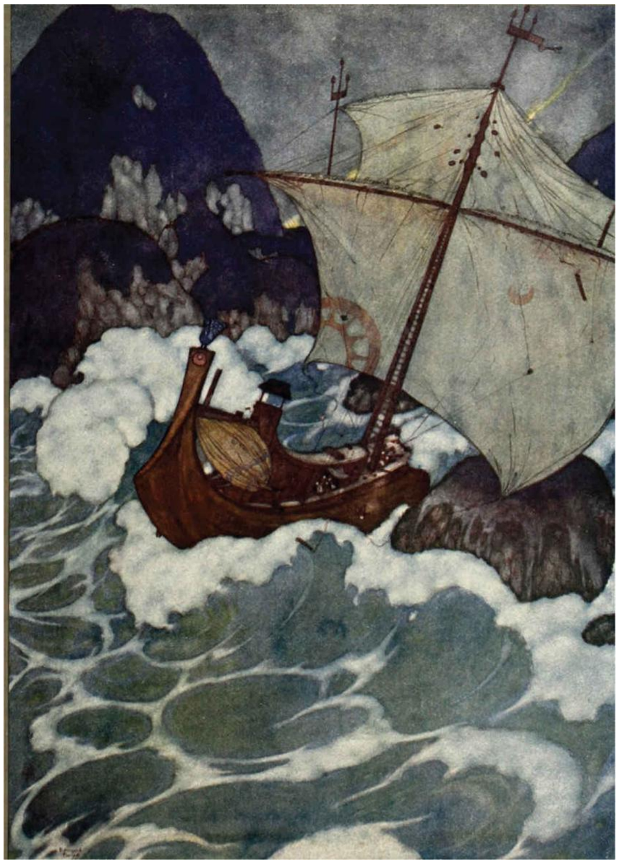

Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Sinbad the Sailor & Other Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1915). Dulac's influential illustrations for the* Nights *reveal his study of Persian book illustrations and Japanese woodcut prints.*

We set out, blown along the waves by the favor of God, and sailed happily for nights and days from sea to sea, island to island, until one day a crosswind rose against us. The captain cast the anchor, and brought the ship to stillness in the middle of the sea, fearing it would sink, and as we prayed, a tempest rose and tore the sails to strips,[57] and threw the people overboard with all their goods and wealth. I was thrown in like the rest and kept myself afloat for half a day. On the point of giving up, God put in my path one of the wooden planks from which the ship was made, and I got on it with some other men …

* * *

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When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

We drifted on the plank, our feet slicing the sea, supported by the wind and waves, for a night and a day. On the second day at noon, a strong gale rose, the sea heaved under us and cast us on an island, and we were like the dead in sleeplessness and cold and hunger, thirst and fear.

We walked along the shore and found many plants, of which we ate a little to survive. On the island’s shore we spent the night, and when day broke, we rose and walked around the island left and right. A building in the distance came into view, and we walked toward it without rest until we found its door.

As we stood outside, a band of naked men came out and took us, without speaking, to their king, who made us sit (we sat) and brought us food like nothing we had seen. But my body could not face it, and, unlike my companions, I ate none of it. And it is thanks to this refusal (God be praised!) that I am still alive, for when my fellows ate that food, their minds went blank,[58] they ate like madmen, and their whole condition changed. Then the people brought them coconut oil and fed it to them and anointed them with it. When my fellows drank that oil, their eyes rolled back and they ate the food unusually. I was sick and sorry, and terrified at what these naked men would do to me.

After observing them, I found that they were Magians,[59] and that the king of their city was a ghoul. Anyone arriving in their country, or anyone they met in the valley or on the roads, they brought to their king and fed with that food and rubbed with that oil, so their bodies would expand and they would eat enormously. Their minds would empty, their thoughts stop, and they became like fools. They were given quantities of food and oil, and when they became fat and thick, they would be slaughtered, roasted, and fed to the king, while his subjects ate their share of flesh unroasted and uncooked.

When I understood this, I was in the sharpest terror for myself and for my friends, who in their stupefaction did not know what had been done to them. They were guarded by a man who took them out each day and let them graze like cattle on the island.

I, meanwhile, grew weaker, thin with fear and hunger, skin and bones. When the Magians saw me in this state, they left me and forgot me, and not one of them remembered me, until one day I found a ruse to slip away.

On a high point above the sea, I saw a herdsman,[60] and I recognized the man who took my fellows out to graze (in his care were many other men like them). When he saw me, he knew that I was sound of mind and not disturbed like my companions, and he made signs to me as if to say, "Turn back and take the right-hand road; it will lead you to the royal road."

I turned as he had told me, found the right-hand road and followed it, now running in my fear, now slowing down to catch my breath. I continued down the road until I could no longer see the man who had shown me the way, and he could not see me.

The sun had set. In darkness I sat down to rest, but hunger, fear, and weariness kept me from sleep. When half the night had passed, I walked along the island until day. The sun came up over the tops of hills, shone on the plains, and found me tired, hungry, parched. I pecked at the herbs and plants that grew around me and chewed on them until my need was stilled.

I went on walking all day and the next night, eating plants to keep the ache at bay, and went on in this way for seven days and nights. On the eighth day's morning, I cast a glance and saw a vague shape in the distance. I walked until I reached it after sunset, and kept a careful eye on it, my heart afraid, and found it was a group of men harvesting pepper. When I was within their sight, they hurried to surround me and said, "Who are you, and from where?"

"I am a stranger," I said, "and have not been lucky." And I told them my whole story and the hard things I had seen …

* * *

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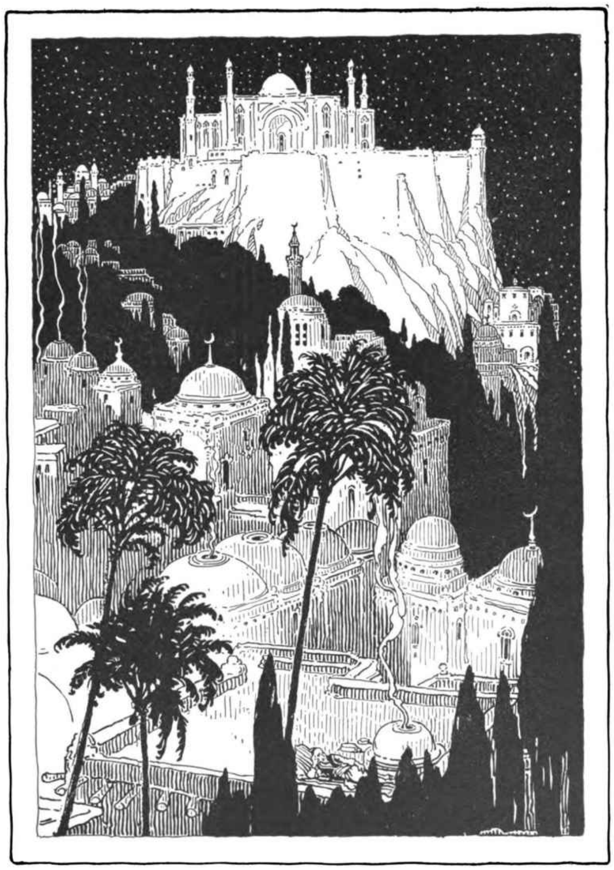
And Shahrazad agreed.

“This is astonishing,” they said, “but tell us how you escaped from the creatures, when they are many and eat men, and no one can defeat them.”

I told them how they took my friends and fed them food, but I abstained, and they congratulated me and were amazed. They sat me near them as they worked, and brought me food, which I ate hungrily.



Sinbad finds refuge in a thriving city. Illustration by Eric Pape from The Arabian Nights: Tales of Wonder and Magnificence *(1923).*

I rested for a while, then they took me on a ship to their island and their homes, and showed me to their king, who welcomed me with warmth and asked about my case. I told him everything that happened from the day I left Baghdad until I came to him. The king was lost in wonder at my story, and had me sit and fed me. I ate my fill and washed my hands and offered thanks to God and praised him for his favor.

Then I left the presence of the king and saw his city,[61] which was thriving, rich, and crowded, full of food and merchandise and markets, thick with trade. Delighted to have found it, heart at peace, I became friendly with its people and its king, who honored me above the great men of his city. I noticed there that all the men, grand and low, rode fine horses without saddles. Intrigued, I asked the king, “Why do you not ride on a saddle? It gives the rider ease and greater power.”

“What is a saddle like?” he asked. “I have never seen or used one in my life.”

I said, “Will you let me make a saddle for you?”

“Very well.”

“I will need some wool,” I said. The king gave orders to bring me all I needed, then I asked for a good carpenter and sat with him and showed him how to make a saddle.[62] I took some wool and teased it to make felt. Then I called for leather, stretched it on the saddle, polished it, and fixed the straps. Then I got a blacksmith and described the shape of stirrups. He forged a splendid pair, which I filed, plated with tin, and finished with fringes of silk.

I brought one of the best of the king’s horses, saddled it, attached the stirrups, bridled it, and led it to the king, who was pleased with the saddle and received it with thanks. He sat on it and loved it and repaid me with a large reward.

When his vizier saw the saddle I had made, he asked me for one, and I made one like it. Then all the leading men and nobles wanted saddles. I made them, having taught the carpenter and blacksmith how to do it, and we busied ourselves and sold our work. I acquired a fortune and a reputation, and I was greatly loved.

One day, as I sat beside the king, he said, “You are beloved here, and one of us. We cannot part with you or bear for you to leave us. You must do what I ask of you without resistance.”

“What do you desire?” I said. “I cannot deny you anything, since you have been kind to me, and I am now your servant.”

“I wish to marry you among us,” he said, “to a fine and charming wife possessed of wealth and beauty. I shall lodge you with me in the palace. You must not oppose me.”

At these words, I was embarrassed[63] and said nothing.

“Not a word?”

“Master,” I said, “the command is yours.”

All at once, he summoned a judge and witnesses and a wife, a woman of high rank and noble birth, great wealth and beauty, owner of much property, and married us …

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

Then the king gave me a beautiful house, standing alone, and gave me servants and attendants, stipends and supplies. I began a life of perfect ease, forgetful of the trouble I had had before, and to myself I thought, “If I go back to my country, I will take her with me. Everything is written in the stars, and nobody can know what lies in store.” I loved my bride, she me, and we lived in harmony and comfort for a length of time.

Then one day, my neighbor’s wife was taken to her Maker, and I went in to offer my condolences and found him in extremis, anxious and distracted. I tried to console him and said, “Do not be sad: God will compensate you with a better wife and a long life, if it be his will.”

He sobbed and said, “My friend, how can God provide me with a better wife when I have one day left to live?”

“Brother,” I said, “use your head and do not make a prophecy of your own death. You are well and in good health.”

“Friend,” he said, “tomorrow you will lose me, and never in your life will you see me again.”

“How so?”

“Today,” he said, “they will lay my wife to rest and put me with her in the tomb, for it is the custom of our country,[64] when the wife dies, to bury the husband alive with her, and when the husband dies, to bury the wife alive with him, so that neither may delight in life after the other.”

“This is an awful custom,” I said. “No one should endure it.”

As we spoke, most of the city’s residents came to console my friend for the death of his wife and for his own, and they set about preparing her according to their custom. They fetched a coffin, laid the woman in it, carried her and her husband to a place outside the city, and stopped beside a mountain by the sea. They lifted a large stone, and beneath it appeared a hollow like a well. Down into the well they threw the woman, then brought the husband, tied around his chest a rope of palm fibers, and lowered him in turn. They let down after him a great jug of sweet water and seven loaves of bread. When he let himself loose from the rope, they drew it up and rolled the stone over the well and went their ways, leaving my friend and his wife in the pit.

“This death is worse than the first,” I thought. I went to the king and said, “My lord, how is it that you bury the living with the dead?”

“This is our custom,” he said. “We have received it from our ancestors.”

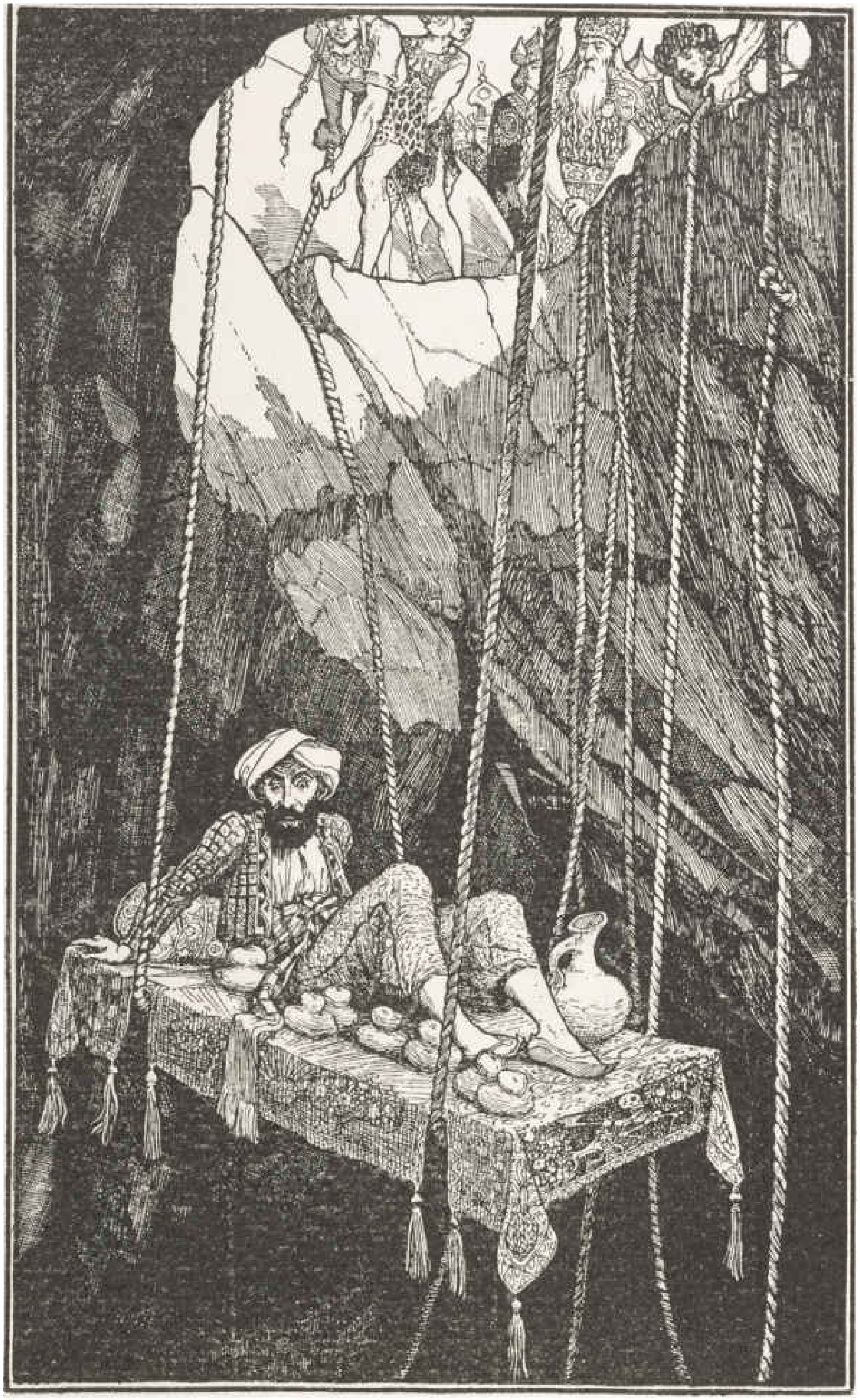
“King of the age,” I said, “would you do to a foreigner like me as you did to that man, should his wife die?”

“Yes,” said the king, “we would bury him, too.”

At these words, I felt my gall bladder would burst in my dismay, and my head went blank in fear that my wife might die before me and they would bury me alive with her. Then I tried to console myself and thought, “Perhaps I’ll die before her, for no one knows who will go first and who will follow.” I proceeded to divert myself with other things, but soon my wife fell ill and died a few days later. The city’s people came to grieve with me, the king among them.

A woman came to wash my wife and arrayed her in the finest clothes and ornaments of gold, necklaces, and jewels. They put her in a coffin and bore her to that mountain and lifted up the stone from the pit’s mouth and threw her in.

Then my friends and my wife’s family turned to me to say good-bye and I cried out, “I am not one of you! I cannot bear this custom.” But they did not listen. They took me, tied me up by force, and lowered me into the well, with seven loaves of bread and a jug of sweet water, in the pit beneath the mountain. Then they said, “Untie the rope,” but I refused, so they threw the rope down on me, covered the mouth of the pit with the stone, and went their ways …



Sinbad is lowered into the cavern. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

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In the pit, I saw many dead bodies (their stink was hard to stand) and blamed myself for what I had done and thought that I deserved it all. Down there, I could not tell night from day, and I sustained myself on little food, eating only when I felt the bite of hunger, drinking only when my throat was dry, fearing that the food and drink I had would be exhausted.

“There is no power and no strength except in God!” I said. “What tempted me to marry in this city? Safe from one disaster, I fall into another. If only I had died at sea or on the mountain, it would be better than this awful death.”[65]

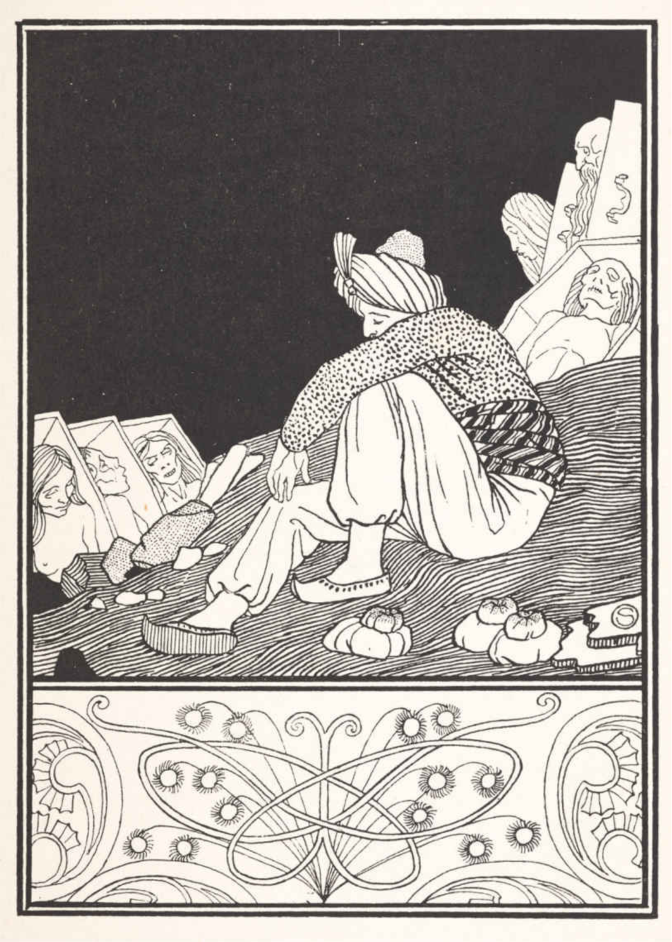
I threw myself down on the bones of the dead, praying for God’s help until hunger gnawed at me and thirst inflamed me. I reached for the bread, ate a little piece, and drank a sip of water.

Then I stood and walked around the cavern and found it wide and empty. On the floor were many dead bodies and rotten bones from long ago, and I made myself a place on the side of the cavern, far from the fresh bodies, where I slept. At length, my bread and water dwindled, until I ate and drank only a mouthful once a day, fearing that the food and drink I had would be used up.

So I lived until one day, as I sat wondering what to do, the rock slid out of place and light poured in. There were people standing at the mouth of the pit, and they let down a dead man with his weeping wife, and with her a quantity of food and water.

I stared at the woman[66] (she did not see me) as they sealed the pit and went away. Then I took the shinbone of a dead man and struck the woman on the head, and she fell down, unconscious. I struck her a second and third time and she died. I took her bread[67] and found she had on her plenty of ornaments, necklaces and jewels and gems, and I took those, too. Then I sat in my place on the side of the cave and ate a little food, just enough to keep the life in me, fearing it would soon run out and I would die of hunger.

I remained in that cavern for some time, and whenever they buried a corpse, I killed the person buried alive[68] and took their food and water to survive. One day, I awoke from sleep and heard a noise, and when I walked toward it, a shinbone in my hand, it fled from me. It was an animal. I followed it to the far end of the cavern and found a tiny point of light, like a star, now there and now concealed. The closer I came, the larger and brighter it grew, until I was sure it was an opening in the cave, either a second mouth or a gash in the rock. Closer to the light, I found it was a gap the animals had made to come and feed on the dead bodies.



“On the floor were many dead bodies.” Illustration by William Strang from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

My spirit lifted, my heart eased, and hope returned to me. I forced my way out of the gap as though in a dream and found myself on a high mountain placed unreachably between the city and the salty sea.

I gave thanks to God, and with a bolder heart I went back into the cave and brought out all the food and water I had saved, and I flung the dead men’s clothes over my own. I gathered many other things that dressed the corpses—necklaces and jewels and strings of pearls, ornaments of gold and silver set with gems—and wrapped them all in the clothes of the dead and carried them out to the shore. Every day, I visited the cave and killed whoever had been buried,[69] male or female, took their food and water, and sat waiting for God to save me with a passing ship …

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

One day, as I sat there pondering my plight, I caught sight of a ship among the roaring waves. I took a white shirt I had borrowed from the dead and tied it to a stick, and I ran along the seashore making signs until they saw me. When they heard my cries, they sent a boat to find me, and said, “Who are you? How did you come to be here? We have never seen a person on this mountain.”

“I am a merchant,”[70] I said, “and was thrown into the sea but saved myself by clinging to a plank with my belongings. After much struggle, with my skill and fortune’s help, I landed on the mountain with my goods.”

They took me into the boat with all that I had taken from the cave, precious things wrapped in dead people’s clothes, and rowed me to their ship and showed me to the captain.

“Friend,” the captain said, “how did you ever make it to the mountain between the city and the sea? I have sailed in this sea under this mountain all my life, but I have never seen a soul except the birds and beasts.”

“I was a merchant,” I said, “on a large ship that was wrecked, and was thrown into the sea with all my goods (the clothes and bundles that you see), but I saved myself and them by clinging to a wooden plank. With fortune’s help I landed on the mountain, where I waited for someone to pass and take me home.”

I left out of my story what had happened in the city and the cave, fearing there might be an islander on board. Then I took a large portion of my property, gave it to the captain, and said, “Master, you are the reason for my rescue. Take this gift in thanks.”

“We take nothing from anyone,”[71] he said, “but when we see a shipwrecked man, we bring him with us, give him food and drink and (if he needs them) clothes. When we reach safe harbor, we are kind to him and leave him with a present for the sake of God.”

When I heard these words, I wished him a long life. We sailed from island to island, sea to sea, and I delighted in my safety, but whenever I thought of my time in the cave with my wife, I nearly lost my mind.

At length we found our way to Basra, where I stayed for a few days and then went on to Baghdad. I entered my quarter and my house, met with my relatives and friends, asked after them, and they were full of joy at my return. Then I stored all I had brought with me, gave alms and gifts to widows and to orphans, and was happy, and I took up my old habits of pleasure in company. This was my fourth voyage, and, if you dine with me now, brother, and come back tomorrow, I shall tell you what happened on the fifth, the strangest yet.

* * *

SINBAD THE SAILOR gave Sinbad the Porter a hundred coins of gold and had the table spread. When the guests had dined, they went their ways in great amazement, for each story was stranger than the last. The porter spent the night at home in deepest wonder, and when the light returned, he rose and prayed and went to see the other Sinbad, who sat with him until the other guests arrived. And after they had drunk and feasted, Sinbad the Sailor spoke …

* * *

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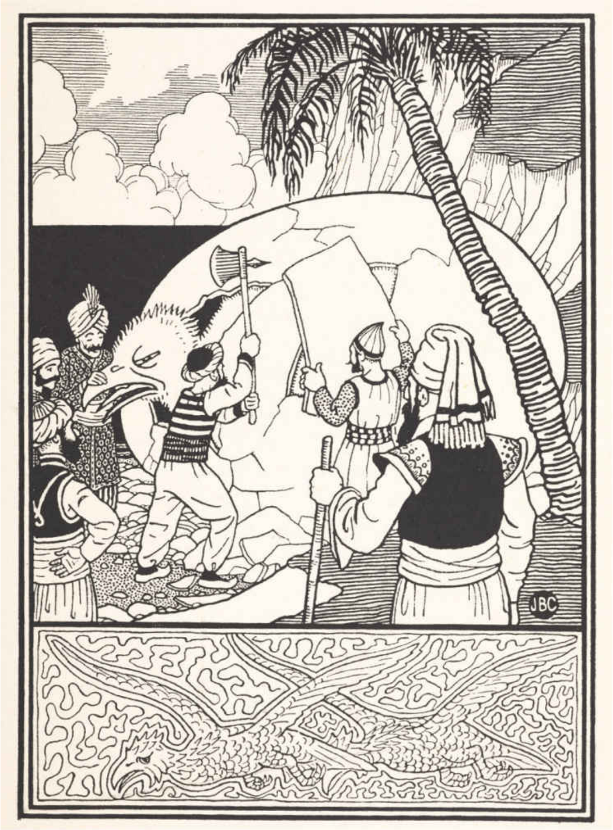
THE FIFTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD

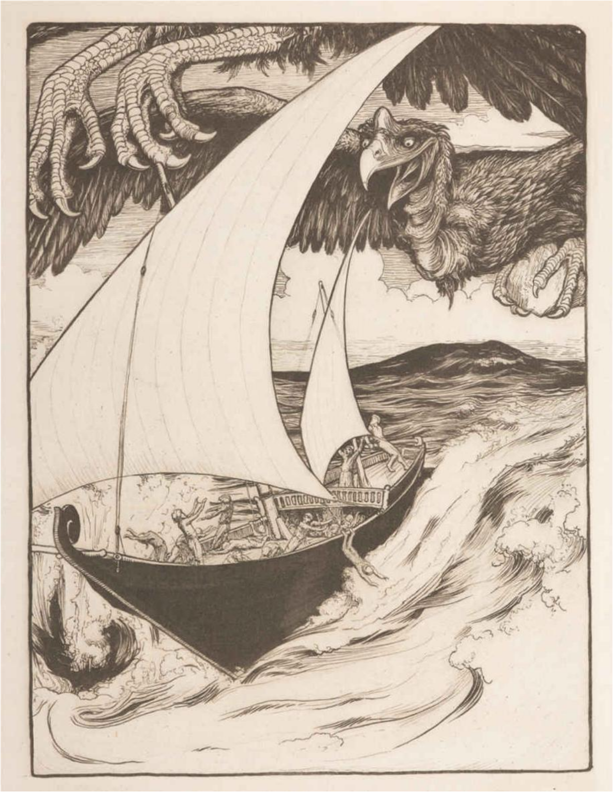
Friends, when I returned from the fourth voyage, I plunged into a life of pleasure and forgot all I had faced, until my soul began again to whisper of the sea,[72] of other sights and islands. I resolved to go, and I bought the necessary goods and journeyed from Baghdad to Basra.

On the shore, I saw a tall and handsome ship and bought it, hired a crew and captain, and brought my slaves and servants and loaded up my bales. Then a company of merchants loaded theirs and paid their way. We set out with light hearts, promising ourselves there would be profit, and sailed from shore to shore and sea to sea, landing everywhere to see the sights and buy and sell.

One day, we came to an island without people, empty save for a large white dome. The merchants landed to examine it (it was the large egg of a rukh, but they did not know), and they struck it with stones and broke it. There poured out a great volume of liquid, and the young rukh appeared inside.[73] They drew it out of the shell, killed it, and took from it a great quantity of meat. Meanwhile I was in the ship, oblivious, until one of the sailors came to me and said, “Master, come and see the egg we thought was a dome.”



They struck the egg and broke it. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*



“The male bird threw its rock at us.” Illustration by John D. Batten, from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

I went to see just as the merchants struck it, and I called to them, “Don’t do it, or the rukh will come and break our ship and kill us.”

But they did not listen, and all at once the sun became concealed, and the day grew dark as if a cloud had passed. We looked up and saw it was the wings of the rukh veiling the sun. When the rukh saw its egg broken, it cried out and called its mate, and they flew over the ship in circles, shouting louder than thunder.

I called to the captain and the crew, “Push off, and let us go before we die!”

The captain hurried, and when the merchants had embarked, he loosed the ship and set sail. When the rukhs saw that we had put to sea, they disappeared, and we hastened to rid ourselves of them and their country. But they caught up with us, carrying between their claws large rocks from the mountain. The male bird threw its rock at us, but the captain steered the ship aside and the rock missed by a hair. It fell into the water with such force that it made the ship surge up and down, and the bottom of the sea appeared.

Then the female bird threw her rock,[74] smaller than the first. As it had been ordained, it fell on the ship's stern and crushed it, sending the rudder flying in twenty pieces, and everyone on board was thrown into the sea. I fought to save myself (for life is sweet), and God had put within my reach one of the wooden planks. I caught hold of it and paddled with my feet, the wind and waves behind me.

It happened that the ship had sunk near an island in the middle of the sea. Fortune cast me on that island, where I landed like a corpse, at death's door from hunger and distress. I threw myself upon the shore and lay there for a while until my heart was calmer. Then I walked around the island and found it like a garden of Paradise, with lush trees and running streams and birds in piping praise for the Eternal. There were many trees and fruits and flowers, and I feasted on the fruit until I was content, took mouthfuls of the stream until my thirst was gone, and I gave thanks to God …[75]

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

I sat on the island until dark. Evening found me tired and afraid (I could not hear or see a soul), so I lay down and slept until the morning. Then I rose and walked among the trees until I came upon a spring of running water, and by the water sat a fine old man, dressed in a waistcloth made of leaves. I thought, "Perhaps this man has landed on the island and is one of those who fell into the sea and nearly drowned."

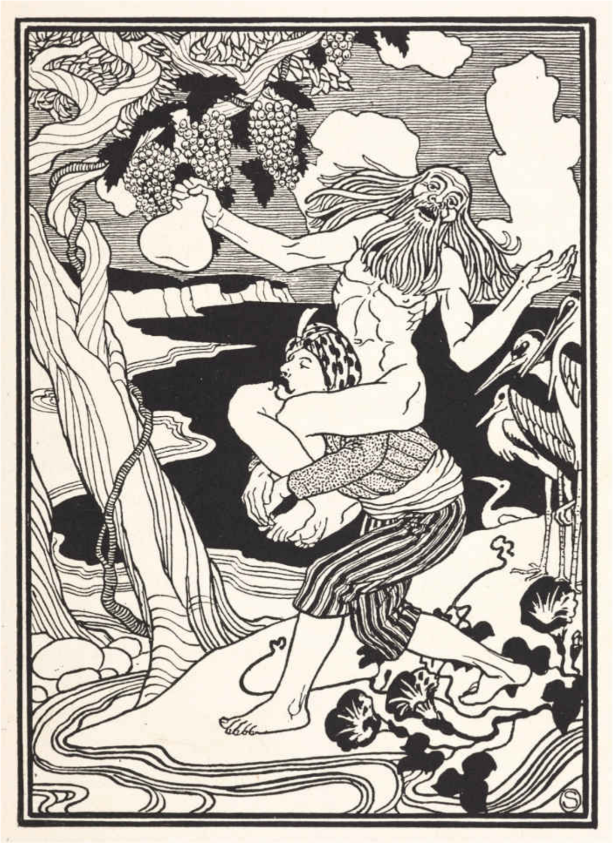
I came near and greeted him, and the old man returned my greeting with a sign but did not speak. I said, "Sheikh, why do you sit here?"[76]

He moved his head and motioned with his hand as if to say, “Take me on your shoulders to the far side of the stream.”

“I will do this man a favor,” I thought, “so God may reward me.”

I took him on my shoulders, carried him to the far side as he had asked, and told him, “Get down at your leisure.”

But he did not get off.[77] Instead, he wrapped his legs around my neck (his skin was dark and rough as buffalo), and in my fear I tried to throw him off. But he pressed his legs around my neck and choked my throat until the world went dark. I fell to the ground as if dying, and he raised his legs and beat me on the back and shoulders, causing me exquisite pain. I got up, exhausted, and he rode on my shoulders, motioning for me to take him through the trees to the best fruit, and if I disobeyed, he gave me blows sharper than lashes. He went on steering me where he wanted to go, and if I loitered or was slow, he beat me like a captive.[78]



The old man never left my shoulders day or night. Illustration by William Strang from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

Soon we made it through the trees to the middle of the island, and he relieved himself on me, and never left my shoulders day or night. When he needed sleep, he wrapped his legs around my neck and slept, then he awoke and beat me. I would rush to stand, unable to resist because I was in agony, and I blamed myself for having tried to help him. I thought, “I did this person a good deed and it has brought me hell. I shall never help another soul.” And I began to wish for death.

This is how we lived, until one day we came to a place on the island rich with gourds, many of them dry. I chose a large and dry one, cut it at the neck and cleaned it. Then I took it to a grapevine, filled it with the juice, plugged the gourd, and put it in the sun and left it there for days until the juice turned to wine. It became my habit to drink every day to find relief from what the demon put me through (drunk, my heart was stronger). One day, he saw me drinking and motioned, “What is this?”

“This is a fine thing that delights the mind and soul,” I said, then I ran with him and danced among the trees, inflamed, clapping and singing in drunken joy. When he saw me in that state, he motioned for the gourd, and I, afraid, obeyed. He drained it, threw it to the ground, then he became enraptured and trembled on my shoulders, dim with drink, and all his limbs and muscles eased. He began to sway, and when I saw that he was drunk and not himself, I held his feet and loosed them from my neck. Lowering myself, I threw him to the ground …

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

I could not believe that I had freed myself from him, but, fearing he would wake from his stupor and hurt me, I found a large stone among the trees and struck him on the head as he lay sleeping[79] (I saw flesh mixed with blood) and killed him (God have no mercy on him). Then I walked about the island in relief, until I returned to the place on the shore where I had been before. I stayed there for a time, sustained by fruit and water, waiting for a ship to pass.

One day, as I sat reflecting on my plight, wondering whether God would ever save me, return me to my country and my family and friends, I saw a ship draw near among the roaring waves and anchor at the island. When the passengers were on dry land, I went to them.

They circled me and asked how I had come to be there. I amazed them with my story, then they said, "The man who rode on your shoulders is called the Old Man of the Sea.[80] No one was ever beneath his limbs and lived to tell the tale. We thank God you are safe."

They gave me food and clothes to hide my nakedness and took me on their ship for many days and nights, until fate led us to a city of tall buildings, all looking out to sea, known as the City of Apes. When night falls, the residents leave through the gates, take to their boats, and spend the night at sea, afraid of the apes descending from the mountains.

I disembarked to look around the city, but as I walked around, the ship departed without my knowing. I regretted ever stepping off, remembering my friends and what had happened with the apes before, and I sat down to weep. Then a man approached and said, "You seem to be a stranger."

"Yes," I said. "I am unlucky. I was in a ship that anchored here, came out to see the city, and when I went back, it was gone."

"Come with us," he said, "and get into a boat. The apes will kill you if you stay inside the city."

I embarked with them and we pushed off the shore until we were a mile away, and there we spent the night. When morning came, we went back to the city, each to his affairs. This was their nightly habit, for anyone who stayed behind would be killed by apes, which spent their days outside the city eating fruit and sleeping in the mountains until night.

This city stood at the far edge of East Africa, and among the strangest things I saw was this. One of those with whom I spent the night said to me, "You are a stranger in this city. Do you have a craft that you can work at?"

"I have no craft," I said, "and cannot make a thing. I was a wealthy man, a merchant, and I owned a ship laden with goods, but it was wrecked at sea and sank with all it held, and I was only saved from drowning by the grace of God.”

At these words, the man got up, brought me a cotton bag, and said, “Take this, fill it with pebbles, go with a party of residents (I will commend you to them), and do as they do. Perhaps you will find a way back to your country.”

He led me out of the city, where I collected enough pebbles to fill the bag. A party of men came out of the city and he said, “Teach this stranger[81] how to gather so that he may earn a living. God will reward you.”

“Very well,” they said.

Each man had a cotton bag like mine, filled with pebbles. We walked until we came to a wide valley, full of trees too tall to climb, and full of apes, who fled from us and climbed the trees. The men began to pelt the apes with pebbles from the bags, and the apes began to pick the fruits and throw them at the men. As I looked, I saw that the fruits were coconuts.

I chose a tree with many apes and pelted them with stones, and they countered with coconuts, which I collected as I saw the others do. Before my bag was out of stones, I had collected a great many coconuts. When the men were done, they pooled the nuts, each carried what he could, and we were back in the city at day’s end.

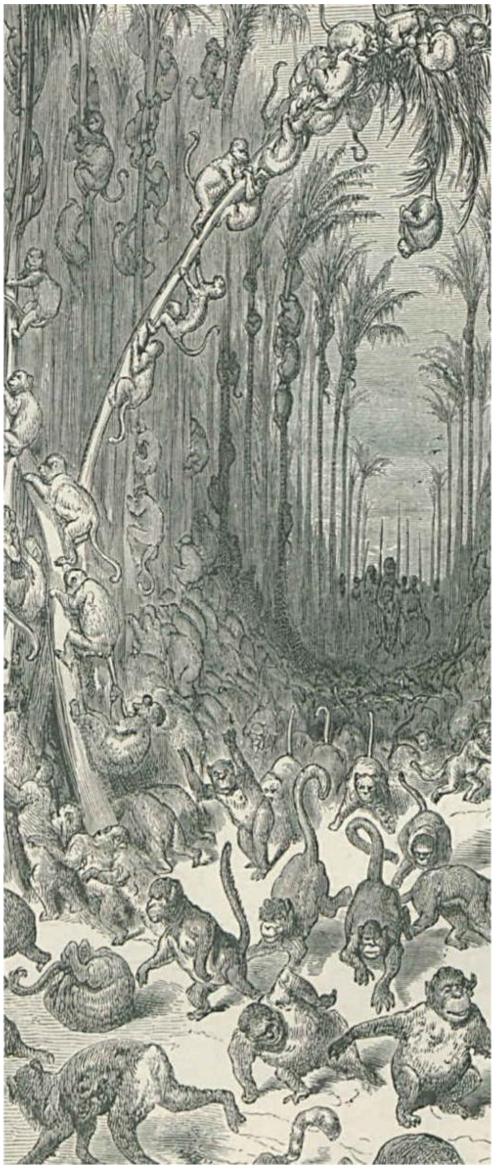
I went to my friend who had commended me to the group and gave him all I had gathered and thanked him for his kindness. But he said, “Take the coconuts and sell them, and use the money well.” Then he gave me a key to a room in his house and said, “Keep there whatever remains of the nuts, and go out with the party every day. Of what you gather, separate the bad and sell them, but keep the best in that room. Perhaps you will gain enough to help you with your voyage.”

“God reward you,” I said, and I did as he had told me. Every day, I filled the bag with stones and went out with the men, and they led me to the trees most abundant with fruit.

I did this for some time, so that I gathered a great number of coconuts and sold them for a fortune, with which I bought whatever took my fancy. I flourished and felt lucky.

One day after some time, a ship arrived, cast anchor by the shore, and out came merchants who began to trade their goods for coconuts and other things. I went to my friend and told him that this ship had come and that I wanted to go home. “The choice is yours,” he said.

I thanked him for his care and said good-bye. I met the captain, booked my passage, and embarked with my coconuts and other things. We set sail that day …



The City of Apes. Detail from illustration by Gustave Doré from Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp; Sindbad, the Sailor, or the Old Man of the Sea; Ali Baba, or the Forty Thieves, *revised by M. E. Braddon (1879).*

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And Shahrazad agreed.

We went from sea to sea, island to island, and everywhere we stopped I sold and traded coconuts, until God lavished on me more than I had lost. Among other places, we saw an island rich in cinnamon and pepper,[82] and the people told us that above each cluster on the pepper plant grows a large leaf, which gives the fruit protection from the sun and rain, and after the rain stops, the leaf turns and falls beside the fruit.

Here I bought, in exchange for coconuts, a quantity of cinnamon and pepper. Then we came to the island of Usrat, the home of Khmer aloeswood, then to another island, a five-day journey, which is the home of Chinese aloeswood, better than Khmer. But the people of this island are less good than on the first, both in their religion and the way they live. They are lustful, fond of wine, and never pray.

Then we came to an island of pearl fishers, where I gave the divers coconuts and told them to go down and try my luck. They dove and brought up a great hoard of large and precious pearls, and said to me, “You are in luck.”

We sailed on until we came to Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then went on to Baghdad, found my quarter and my house, my relatives and friends, and they congratulated me on my return. Then I stored the goods I brought, clothed the widows and the orphans, and gave alms and gifts to all those dear to me. As God had rewarded me with four times what I had lost,[83] I forgot the misery I had faced at sea and took up my old pleasures once again. This was my fifth voyage. Now let us eat, and tomorrow I will tell you of the sixth, more wonderful than this.

* * *

When the feast was over, Sinbad gave the porter a hundred coins of gold, which he took home, amazed. In the morning, he rose and prayed and then returned to the house of the sailor, who kept him company until the other friends arrived. Then the table was spread, and when the guests were warm with food and wine, Sinbad the Sailor spoke …

THE SIXTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD

Dear friends, when I returned from my fifth voyage, I put its trials out of mind and gave myself to the pursuit of joy and lived a life of perfect pleasure and delight. One day, a band of merchants came to me, bearing marks of travel, and I remembered my return and my reunion with the ones I loved, and in my soul was longing for the sea. I resolved to make another trip, and I bought fine and precious goods and packed them up, and journeyed from Baghdad to Basra, where I found a large ship full of merchants and distinguished men. I loaded my goods and we left …

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And Shahrazad agreed.

We sailed from place to place,[84] city to city, buying and selling and seeing the sights, rejoicing in our luck. But one day the captain gave a shout, threw off his turban, slapped his face, tore at his beard, and fell onto the deck in grief and rage. All the merchants gathered and said, “Captain, what is it?”

“We have strayed from our course,” he said, “and passed into an unknown sea. If God does not deliver us, we shall all die, so pray to God!”

He climbed the mast and tried to ease the sails, but the wind blew hard against the ship and drove it back, and the rudder broke near a high mountain on an island.

“There is no power and no strength except in God,” the captain said, “and no one can prevent what is set down. We have fallen into danger. There is no escape.”

All the people wept and said farewell[85] because their lives were ending and their hope was gone. The ship was hurled against the mountain and broke into pieces, its planks came undone, and all that was inside it fell into the sea. The merchants were thrown in and some of them drowned, and some held on and crawled ashore.

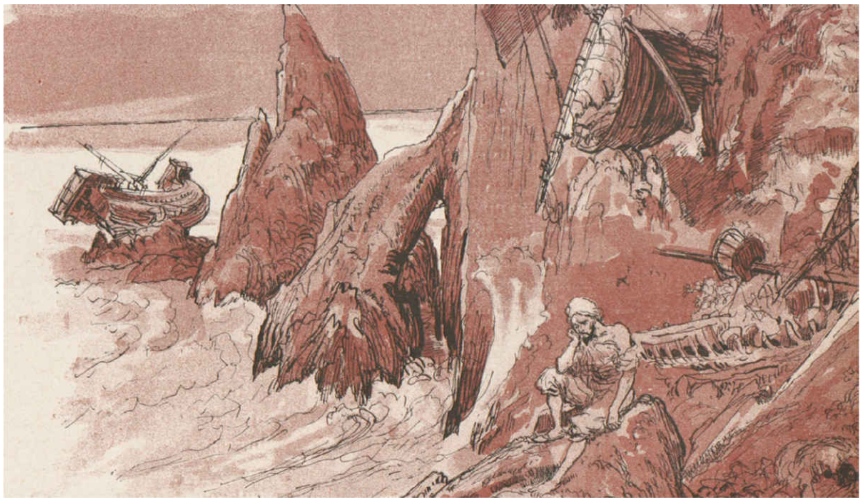
I was among those who landed on the island,[86] which was strewn with broken ships, all their treasure scattered on the shores. As I walked about, I saw a stream of water, which issued from the near side of the mountain and entered from the other. All the men went over the mountain and dispersed, their minds possessed by the great wealth they saw scattered all around. In that stream, I saw all kinds of jewels and precious stones, royal pearls that were like gravel in the riverbed so that the channels glittered in the fields.

On the island we found aloeswood of the best kind, both Chinese and Khmer, and a spring of crude ambergris,[87] which flows under the sun like wax along the mountainside and down to the shore. The creatures of the deep come up and swallow it and take it back to sea, but it heats inside their bellies and they spout it from their mouths into the water, where it rises to the surface, changing color as it cools, and when the waves return it to the shore, merchants in the know collect and sell it.

As for the ambergris that is not swallowed, it flows over the riverbank and stiffens on the ground, and under the hot morning rays it runs, perfuming the valley with a scent like musk. When the sun withdraws, it hardens once again, but the place where ambergris is found is out of reach, and nobody can get to it because mountains surround it.

We wandered on, delighting in the works of God[88] and worried on our own account: we had collected on the coast a small amount of food and consumed it carefully, eating only once in every day or two, fearing it would run out, fearing death by hunger and by thirst.

Each of us who died we washed and shrouded in the clothes the sea cast on the shore, and buried him, until the greater number lost their lives. The remaining few were weakened by a disease they caught at sea, and soon I saw all my companions die. I was left alone with little food, and I wept and said, “If only I had died before my friends and they had washed and buried me! There is no power and no strength except in God ….”



Sinbad lands on an island strewn with broken ships. Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

* * *

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Soon I rose and dug myself a deep grave on the shore, and told myself, “When I am sick and close to death, I will lie down and die here. The wind will cover me in sand and I will have my burial.”

I called myself a fool for having ever left my country,[89] after what I suffered the first time and the second, and the third and fourth and fifth, each more full of horror than the one before.

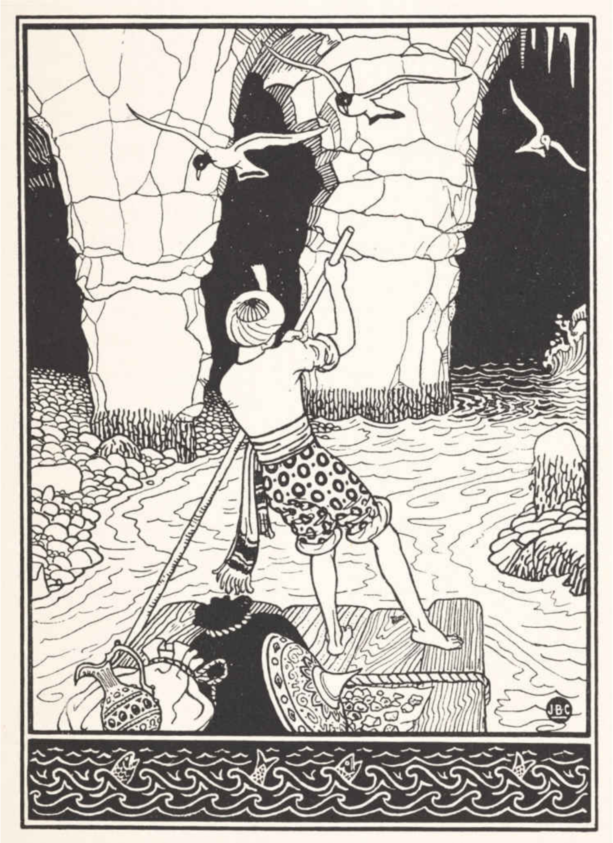
I did not believe that I could save myself this time. I renounced the sea and told myself I did not need the money because I had enough. Indeed, I had so much that I could never spend it, not even half of it, in all my life.

Then I thought, “This stream must have an end, and it must lead to people. The best course is to make a little raft, wide enough for me, take it down and launch it on the stream and drift. If I find safety, I am safe, and if I die, better in the stream than here.”

I rose and went to gather aloeswood and bound it with rope I salvaged from the wrecks. I also took straight planks of even size and placed them on the wood, and made a raft just smaller than the stream, and fixed a piece of wood on either side to serve as oars. Then I launched it on the water, having taken with me jewels and pearls that were like gravel, the best of the crude ambergris, and what remained of food. I did as the poet said:

Quit the site of harm.
Leave the house to mourn its builder.[90]
Nothing lost: there will be other
Homes, no second you.
Do not worry what the nights
May bring: despair will end.
If your life is set to stop
Somewhere, you will die there.
Do not entrust your mission
To another but your soul
Your truest friend.

I drifted with the stream, full of doubt about my fate, until I came to where it disappeared under the mountain. I was drawn into a dark and narrow tunnel, raft rubbing at the sides and my head against the roof. There was no turning back. I thought that if the channel narrowed any more, I would be stuck and die there, and I threw myself down on the raft and drifted on, not knowing night from day because it was so dark under the mountain, fearing death. Sleep came over me in my distress.



Sinbad is drawn into a narrow tunnel. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

When at length I woke, I found myself in open air, the raft moored to an island and around me Indians and Abyssinians,[91] who addressed me in their language. But I did not understand and thought myself in a dream.

One of them approached and in Arabic said, “Peace be on you, brother! Who are you? Where from? Why are you here? We are the owners of these lands and fields, which we came to water when we found you here asleep, so we tied your raft beside us and waited till you woke.”

“I am hungry,” I said. “Give me food, then ask me anything.”

He fed me and I ate until I was content and life returned to me. I praised God for everything, happy to be out and among people, and I told them my whole story and how I suffered in the narrow stream …

* * *

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They talked among themselves and said, "We must take him to our king and let him hear this story."

And they took me, together with the raft and all the goods it held, the jewels and precious stones and gold, and showed me to their king, who greeted me and asked about me, and I told him everything that had happened, start to end. He was amazed and gave thanks for my safety. Then I brought from the raft a quantity of jewels and gems and ambergris and aloeswood, and gave them to the king, who took my gift and treated me with grace. He gave me lodging in his palace, and I came to know the finest minds, who paid me great respect, and I never left the palace of the king.

One day he asked about my country, and about the caliph in Baghdad.[92] I talked about the justice of his rule, until he said, "The caliph's ways are wise, and you have made me love him. Let me prepare for him a present and send it back with you."

"Very well," I said. "I will tell him that you are a faithful friend."

I went on living with the king in ease and honor, until one day I heard talk in the palace of a company of merchants who were fitting out a ship for Basra. I decided that I had to go with them. I rose at once, kissed the king's hand, and told him I desired to travel in that ship. "That is your choice," he said, "but if you were to stay, we would be glad. We have enjoyed your company."

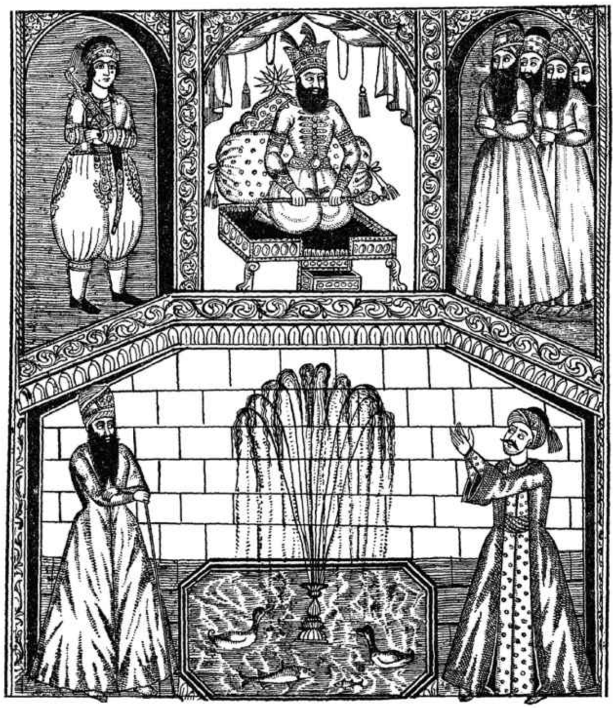
"You have been kind," I said, "but I long for my people and my country."[93]

At these words, the king called for the merchants, commended me to them and paid my fare, gave me many presents and, for Caliph Harun al-Rashid, a splendid gift. I said good-bye and set sail with the merchants, and we went with the wind and God on our side from sea to sea, island to island. We reached Basra in safety, where I spent a few days packing up my goods and went on to Baghdad.

There I sought an audience with the caliph[94] and gave him the king's gift. Then I made it to my quarter and my house, stored my goods, and met my family and friends, and distributed my presents and gave alms. I took up my former ways and gave myself to pleasure and forgot what I had suffered. This was my sixth voyage, and tomorrow I will tell you the story of the seventh, still more wonderful than all the others.

* * *

SINBAD had the table spread and fed his guests, and he gave the porter one hundred coins of gold, which he took home, amazed. In the morning after prayer, the porter went back to the house, and when the guests had all arrived, Sinbad the Sailor spoke …



The court of Caliph Harun al-Rashid. From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of the One Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

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THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD[95]

FRIENDS, when I returned from my sixth voyage, I went back to my old ways and gave my life to pleasure and diversion night and day, until my soul began to stir again with longing for the sea, the company of merchants, and the sight of other skies.[96] I resolved to go, and I packed a quantity of goods and bore them from Baghdad to Basra, where I found a ship ready to sail, heavy with merchants. I joined them and became their friend, and we sailed at peace under a gentle wind, nothing on our lips but trade and travel, until we passed the City of China.[97]

There a storm attacked us, soaking our bales. We covered them in felt to shield them from the rain, and we began to pray, imploring God to save us. The captain drew his belt tighter around his waist, went up the mast, looked right and left, then he clawed at his face and tore his beard, and we said, "Captain, what is it?"

"Weep for your souls," he said, "and say good-bye. The wind has turned against us and driven us into the farthest seas on earth."

He came down, opened a chest, lifted out a cotton bag that he untied, took out of it a powder like ash, wetted it and waited, then held it to his nose. Out of the chest he took a small book, read a little from it, and said, "Friends, in this book it says that no one can come to this place and escape, for it is called the Clime of Kings, and in it is the tomb of our Lord Solomon, son of David (peace upon him). Here are serpents of enormous size, alarming to see, and when a ship draws near, a whale rises from the sea and swallows it whole."

We were lost in wonder at the captain’s words when, under us, the ship began to rise and fall. We heard a roar like thunder, dead with terror, sure of doom, then there came up to us a whale high as a mountain.

Wild with fear, we wept for our souls, ready for death, gaping at the huge and ugly fish. Then a second whale appeared, bigger than the first or any we had seen, and as we said good-bye, we saw a third, larger than the others, and we were driven mad with dread.

We saw the three whales circle the ship, one opening its mouth to swallow it, when suddenly a gale rose and the ship was thrown against a reef and fell to pieces, all its planks undone, and all aboard were cast into the water.

I tore off all my clothes except a shirt and swam until I found a plank and clung to it, climbed onto it, and bobbed as a toy on the water, plaything for the wind and waves, eaten by fear and hunger. I felt myself a fool for seeking danger when I had it easy, and I told myself, “You never learn, Sinbad. Every time you go through hell, you come running back for more, and every time you vowed to quit the sea, you lied, so take what’s coming. You deserve it all …”

* * *

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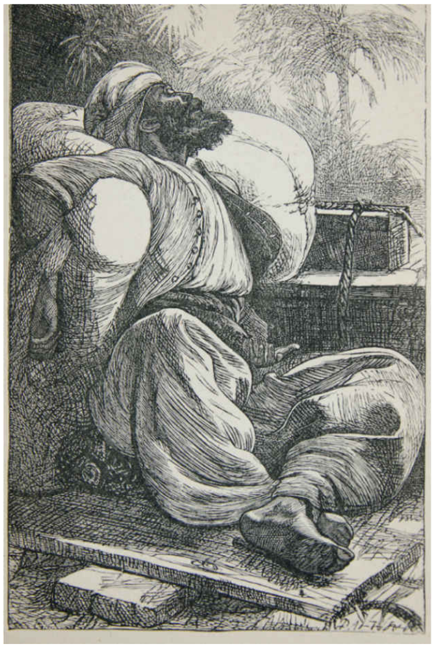
“All this is God’s design,”[98] I thought, “to turn me from my greed, which is the source of all my suffering, for I have enough money.”

I came to my senses and said, “This time I will keep my word: I give up the sea. Never will I speak or think of it again.”

And I repented, weeping, recalling my old life of happiness and play and ease. I floated for two days until I came to a large island thick with trees and rivers. I fed myself with fruit and sipped from the streams until my strength returned. On the far shore, I found a mighty river of sweet water running fast, and I recalled my raft and thought, “I’ll make another to escape. If I escape, I’ll have my wish and vow to God never to move again, and if I perish, I will be at peace.”

Then I gathered timber from the trees (which were all rare sandalwood, though I knew nothing of it) and fashioned twigs and grass into a rope, bound it to the wood, and thought, “If I survive, it is God’s work.”

Lying on the raft, I drifted down the island for three days (with no food but the river, I was dizzy as a bird with fear and hunger) until the water carried me to a tall mountain under which the river ran. I trembled to remember the other narrow river, and tried to stop the raft and get off, but the current drew me under. I was sure it would be death this time.



“Lying on the raft, I drifted down the island for three days.” Illustration from The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments *by George Fyler Townsend (1860).*

“There is no power and no strength except in God!” I cried, but after a short way the raft emerged in open space, a valley into which the river fell like thunder, swift as wind. I clung to the raft, afraid of falling off, lurching left and right, unable to stop or steer it to the bank, until it brought me to a large and pretty city full of people.[99] When they saw me rushing down the river, they threw out a net and ropes and drew the raft to shore.

I fell among them like a dead man, starved and sleepless, petrified. From the crowd emerged a wise old man who welcomed me and threw a mass of fine clothes over me. He took me to the bath and gave me things to drink and scent my skin, then to his house, where his family made a fuss over me. He sat me in a pleasant place, set exquisite food before me, and I ate my fill and praised God for my safety. Then pages brought warm water and I washed my hands, and servants followed with silk towels to dry my hands and wipe my mouth. Then the man gave me a room in a part of his house and had the servants wait on me and see to all my needs, and they worked hard to serve me.

There I stayed as a guest for three days, fragrant and well fed, until my life and strength returned to me. On day four, the old man came to me and said, “My boy, we love your company and thank God you are safe, but won’t you come with me to sell your goods at the market? What you gain may buy you something you can trade with.”

I said nothing for a while, wondering what goods he meant, and he said, “Son, don’t worry. Come with me, and if you get an offer that you like, accept it, and if not, I will store your goods until next time.”

I went along with him to see what the goods were, unable to refuse him after all his care. I followed him to market and found that he had cut my raft in pieces, and he had given the sandalwood to the broker, who was crying it for sale …

* * *

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The merchants came to bid until their offers reached one thousand dinars. The old man turned to me and said, “My boy, this is the current price. Will you sell or shall I store them for you while you wait for better?”

“My lord,” I said, “I leave it up to you. Do as you wish.”

“Son,” he said, “will you sell me this wood for a hundred more than the merchants have offered?”

“Sold,” I said, and then he had his pages carry the wood to his stores as we returned to sit in his house. He counted out the money, put it in bags, locked them away, and gave me the key.

After a few days, the man said, “Son, I have a question and I wish you would say yes.”

“What is it?”

“I am very old,” he said, “and have no sons, but I have a daughter who is young and lovely, possessed of wealth and beauty. I would like to marry her to you,[100] so you may live with her in our country. I will give you all I have, for I am old, and you will take my place.”

When I did not say a word, he said, “Say yes. I wish you well, and you would be a son to me and have all that is mine. If you wish to travel to your country and trade, no one will stop you. This is your property to do with as you please.”[101]

“To tell the truth,” I said, “you are a father to me, but the stress I suffered has impaired my judgment and my mind. The choice is yours.”

Then he had his pages call the judge and witnesses, wed me to his daughter, and had a great feast served. When I met my wife, I found a perfect beauty, dressed in fine cloth, gold and precious stones, an outfit worth a treasure. She pleased me and affection grew between us.

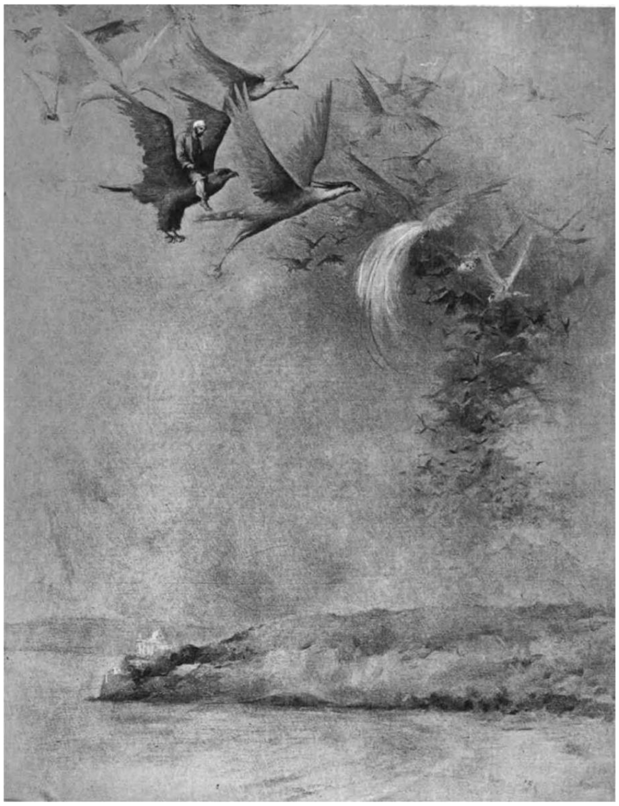
I lived with her in all delight until her father passed into God’s mercy. We prepared and buried him, and his possessions passed to me. His servants became mine, and the merchants chose me for his office, for he was their head, so that none of them bought anything without his knowledge and consent.

When I mingled with the people of the city, I saw that the men would change at the turn of every month. They would grow wings[102] and fly up to the skies, and no one would remain except women and children.

“When the new month comes,” I thought, “I will ask one of them to carry me and see how far they go.”

When the day came, and their forms and colors changed, I went to one of them and said, “Carry me with you.”

“That is not possible,” he said, but I pressed him until he yielded. I joined them on their journey to the sky without telling a soul, and we flew so high I heard the angels praising God[103] beneath the starry dome. I marveled and said, “Glory be to God!”



“We flew so high I heard the angels praising God.” Illustration by Albert Letchford, from A Series of Seventy Original Illustrations to Captain Sir R. F. Burton’s “Arabian Nights” *(1897).*

At these words, a fire came down from heaven, nearly burning us, and the men I traveled with flew down to a high peak and left me there in rage. I called myself a fool and said, “There is no power and no strength except in God. Whenever I am free from one ordeal, here comes another.”

I sat there, uncertain where to go, when I saw two young men pass like moons, each with a rod of red gold. I drew near and greeted them, they returned my greeting, and I said, “Who are you?”

“Servants of God,” they said, and giving me a rod of gold like theirs, they went their way and left me. I walked along the mountain ridge, leaning on the staff and thinking of the boys, when I saw a serpent appear with a man in its mouth, half-swallowed to his shoulders.

“Who frees me,” he cried out, “God will free from every pain.”

And I struck the serpent with my rod of gold …[104]

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The man came near and said, “Since you have saved me, I will never leave you. You are my companion on the mountain.”

We walked until we met a band of men, and among them was the man who flew me up there and then set me down. I went up to him and said, “My friend, this is not how friends treat friends.”

“It was you who nearly killed us,” he said, “when you praised God on my back.”

“Forgive me,” I said. “I had no idea.”

Then he picked me up again, on the condition that I not mention God or sing his praise, and he flew me to my house. I met my wife, who thrilled that I was safe.

“Do not go near those men,” she said. “They are brothers of the devil[105] and they do not worship God.”

“How did your father mix with them?”

“My father was not one of them,” she said, “nor did he act like them. But now that he is dead, I think that you should sell our things and take me to your country. Nothing keeps me here.”

I sold our property and looked for someone going to Baghdad. I found a group in town who built themselves a ship, and I booked passage and embarked with my wife and what we could carry, leaving our land behind. We sailed with a good wind from sea to sea, island to island, all the way to Basra, where we lost no time and moved on to Baghdad.

There I found my house and stored my goods, and met my family and friends, who had lost all hope of my return (the voyage lasted twenty-seven years). When I told them all that I had seen, they were astonished.

I vowed to God that I would never leave again by land or sea, and that the seventh voyage was the one to end all voyages and quell my appetites. I gave thanks to Him for leading me back home. Consider, Sinbad, what I suffered.

* * *

AT THE STORY'S END,[106] Sinbad the Sailor and Sinbad the Porter remained friends, bound by love and joy for all their lives, until there came to them the feller of delights, parter of ways, wrecker of castles and builder of tombs, the cup of death. Praise be to the One who never dies.

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1. *The Story of Sinbad the Sailor:* This title corresponds to Galland's first French translation of this story, "Histoire de Sindbad le marin." In early English translations, the title reflects the frame into which the tales of Sinbad's voyages are inserted. Richard Burton calls it "Sindbad the Seaman and Sindbad the Landsman," and John Payne calls it "Sindbad the Sailor and Sindbad the Porter." These English titles are more suggestive of the social and psychological interpretations of the story.

2. *there lived in Baghdad:* Like other stories in the *Nights*, the tales of Sinbad are associated with the glory years of the Abbasid Empire, and the Caliph Harun al-Rashid makes an appearance in the sixth voyage (and, in some versions, the seventh voyage). These stories speak to a period that was imagined as a time of prosperity and peace, when commerce flourished and Arabs traveled across the Indian Ocean and into the South China Sea.

3. *he moved toward the music:* As in "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," this story begins when someone of a lower class is drawn into a dwelling possessing all the trappings of a life of beauty, wealth, and pleasure.

4. *"some are weary, some at ease":* The porter meditates upon the vagaries of fate that leave some poor and some rich. The poetry that follows sets up the key contrast in the story, which is personified in the presence of two Sinbads—one fabulously wealthy and one struggling to survive. As Sinbad the Sailor overhears these verses, he will draw the poor porter into a round of storytelling meant to explain these inequalities.

5. *followed the page into the splendid home:* Sinbad's luxurious home demonstrates to readers the benefits of the merchant's entrepreneurial lifestyle. Despite the title of the story, Sinbad is a merchant rather than a sailor, and his tales reveal the risks as well as the rewards that come with this profession. This story is a natural fit for a story collection that represents the values of a middle class of merchants and traders. Sinbad's mercantile ethos is perhaps best captured, and critiqued, in Karel Zeman's Communist-era animated film *Pohádky tisíce a jedné noci (Tales of 1,001 Nights)*, released in Czechoslovakia in 1974. Its gorgeous frames inspired by Persian miniatures do not shy away from the violence and greed of the merchant's misadventures.

6. *"You are my brother now":* Sinbad responds to the porter's verse (which had claimed, "I am his kin, he mine") by asserting the spiritual kinship of the two men. Their shared names are a symbol of their shared status within Islam, but Bruno Bettelheim argues that the two characters can also be interpreted as two sides of one human personality. In this framework, the merchant Sinbad represents the desires associated with the id and the porter Sinbad represents the rationality of the ego.

7. *"I was not granted this good fortune":* Sinbad does not narrate to save his life, as Shahrazad does, but rather to justify the wealth that he now enjoys. These are not nocturnal stories designed to lure the listener into a suggestible state where he might ultimately be reeducated. These are stories of wonder delivered in the light of day to prove that a merchant's profession may ultimately yield enormous rewards against long odds if a goal is pursued with ingenuity and perseverance. These are real-world lessons, not a play of the subconscious.

8. *"when I came of age, I took it all":* The youthful Sinbad's reckless squandering of his inheritance is a classic motif in the stories of the *Nights*. Other examples can be found in "Ali of Cairo and the Haunted House in Baghdad," "ʿAli Shar and Zumurrud," "The Man Who Never Laughed," and "The Sleeper and the Waker." Sinbad's motivation to make his first voyage is clearly to make his fortune through trading goods. Since he is not a sailor by profession, he is not particularly prepared for the challenges of these voyages. He is certainly not the swashbuckling adventurer who features in the many *Sinbad* films.

9. *"three things are better than three others":* In his translation of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, Edward Lane noted that the first two assertions can be found in the Bible's Book of Ecclesiastes. The suggestion is that the day of death is better than the day of birth because nothing more is wanted beyond that point. A similar sentiment is captured in the third phrase (vol. 3, p. 82, n. 7).

10. *"No heights were ever scaled":* Unlike the poetry included in "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," this verse does not explore the rich emotional registers of Arabic verse. Instead, it reinforces the theme that rewards will only come after struggles. It forms a significant contrast to the verse of the porter at the opening of the story, which had credited fate with providing either wealth or misery. The stories of Sinbad represent a different register in the *Nights*, for they are tightly bound to the ethos of risk-taking among a certain class of travelers and traders.

11. *a boat bound for Basra:* For each voyage, Sinbad leaves from and returns to Baghdad, which represents the center of the world in these stories. However, the seaport of Basra features in Sinbad's tales as well. During the Abbasid Empire, it was a popular meeting place for sailors, merchants, and travelers from all parts of the world.

12. *“this island where you stand is not an island”:* The plot motif of a large fish mistaken for an island appears in a series of other sources. Pliny is often considered the origin for this idea, but others trace it to *The Alexander Romance* of Pseudo-Callisthenes. The idea appears in the thirteenth-century treatise on “Wonders of the World,” produced by Persian geographer al-Qazwini, where the island is a giant tortoise, and it is taken up by John Milton in the seventeenth century. The image has been endlessly recycled in animated films and cartoons, but it once also anchored Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of religion in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: “On an isle they once thought they had landed, when the sea tossed them about; but behold, it was a slumbering monster!” A more entertaining use is made of this motif in the DreamWorks animated film *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003).

13. *God put in my path a wooden pail:* Sinbad is always willing to credit the Almighty for any aid he receives through his various trials. He is equally prone to expressing his resignation to fate.

14. *Yet I began to move:* It is typical that, in his lowest moment, Sinbad finds the strength to move. Tzvetan Todorov presents Sinbad as the classic “narrative man,” who acts in response to the plot rather than displaying distinctive psychological characteristics. This pattern of response to adversity is characteristic of Sinbad throughout his voyages. He expresses his despair in resignation to fate, but then he acts to move the plot forward.

15. *“the stallions of the sea emerge”:* In the thirteenth century, al-Qazwini reported that the water-horse “is like the land-horse, save that he is large in the mane and tail, and more handsome in color; and his hoof is cloven, like the hoof of the wild ox.” He asserts that a foal produced with a water-horse for a sire and a land-mare for its dam is extremely beautiful. Edward Lane responds to al-Qazwini’s assertion that the water-horse is found in the Nile by assuming that the term refers to a hippopotamus (vol. 3, pp. 83–84, n. 10).

16. *“I will take you”:* Despite the many dangers Sinbad encounters on his travels, he is often treated with kindness by the strangers that he meets. The stories take place in a world where strangers are not automatically feared and where bastions of civilization that share a basic code of civility can be found in distant places. The customs of mutual aid that seem to prevail facilitate commerce and might be comforting for prospective merchants (who might be the audience for these stories).

17. *city of King Mihrajan:* Translator Edward Lane spent a great deal of time trying to identify the precise geography of the islands on which Sinbad finds himself. Through a survey of existing literature, he surmised that this kingdom was located on Borneo. The evidence for this can, of course, be disputed (vol. 3, pp. 84–87, n. 12).

18. *They told me they belonged to different castes:* Information about the organization of Indian society into castes would have been drawn from the reports of sailors and travelers. Travel tales like those featuring Sinbad would have acted as repositories of useful information, and, like the accounts of Muslim travelers like Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century, they familiarized readers with distant lands.

19. *an island called Kabil:* Relying on the account of al-Qazwini, Lane supposes this island to be near Borneo and cites a 1708 history of the Moluccas by B. L. De Argensola to describe a desert

island near Banda known for “cries, whistles, and roarings” and where “dreadful apparitions are seen” (vol. 3, p. 88, n. 17).

20. *a fish two hundred cubits long:* Geographical treatises circulating during the medieval period include numerous reports like this one, which might be included under the title of *aja’ib* —“strange and wondrous things.” In his treatise on the world’s wonders, al-Qazwini reports that a fish more than three hundred cubits long was known to frequent the “Sea of China” and was found on the island of Wak-Wak. He claims that it was feared because of the damage it could do to ships, and people tried to drive it away when they saw it (Lane, vol. 3, p. 89, n. 19). Edward Lane grounds his translation in these geographical reports, but Richard Burton suggests that these are merely exaggerated descriptions of the whales that commonly appeared off the coast of East Africa. He suggests that the owl-faced fish was a seal or perhaps a manatee (vol. 6, p. 11, n. 3).

21. *“We will sell them”:* The captain shows remarkable integrity. If this sequence of stories is read as a guidebook for prospective merchants, this episode may be taken as a demonstration of the moral code that was supposed to prevail within this profession. In this case, the profits from Sinbad’s goods were supposed to be returned to his family.

22. *“Listen to my story”:* In moments like this, Sinbad shows himself to be a “narrative man.” In a practical sense, he is proving his identity to the captain through the story that he tells, but Todorov would argue that more fundamentally Sinbad is what he has experienced. His character is simply a vehicle for the plot.

23. *“Lying is the mark of liars”:* Both Edward Lane and Husain Haddawy resolve the strangeness in this phrase by translating “liar” as “hypocrite.”

24. *I sold all my goods for a great price:* These passages are reminders of the essential tasks of a merchant on a trading expedition. “Sinbad the Sailor” is providing detailed information to his listener, “Sinbad the Porter,” about the life of a merchant.

25. *forgot the strangeness and the danger of my trip:* Each of Sinbad’s journeys ends in a similar fashion, as he reaps his rewards in the form of property and enjoys some time with his family, but then his mood shifts. Ferial Ghazoul argues that Sinbad is a reverse image of the heroes of folktales. While the return of the hero to the safety of home is usually the happy conclusion to a tale (as in *The Odyssey*, for instance), Sinbad’s return merely generates a desire to be uprooted once again. A spiral structure evolves, in which “the end equals the beginning” (p. 71).

26. *The Second Voyage of Sinbad:* The stories of the *Arabian Nights* with their interruptions and interpolated stories were a natural fit with the practice of serialization in European journals and newspapers. The voyages of Sinbad were among the first pieces of the *Nights* to be serialized in England, based on a translation from Galland’s *Les mille et une nuits*. The tales appeared in weekly issues of *Churchman’s Last Shift, or, Loyalist’s Weekly Journal* in 1720.

27. *a longing in my soul:* As he relates his story in the first person, Sinbad confesses that the urge to set out and trade is a compulsion. As a “narrative man” (in Todorov’s terms), Sinbad’s behavior could be attributed to the simple fact that he is a merchant—and a merchant’s function is to trade.

28. *I found a find new ship:* In his translation of Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī's *Accounts of China and India*, Tim Mackintosh-Smith explains that the ships that sailed the western Indian Ocean at this time would have been constructed without nails: "the planks of the hulls were drilled, the corresponding holes of adjacent planks were 'sewn' tightly together with coir rope, and all the seams and holes were thoroughly caulked" (p. 143, n. 117). Tim Severin attempted to replicate this construction technique and set sail to retrace Sindbad's journeys in 1980 (*The Sindbad Voyage*).

29. *The ship had sailed without me:* The events that initiate disaster on each of Sinbad's voyages are varied by the narrator. Each represents another potential mishap about which the prospective merchant should be warned. Sinbad reacts typically—by falling into deep despair and then suddenly taking action.

30. *a huge bird called the rukh:* The enormous rukh makes several appearances in the *Nights* and was a staple of Arabic folklore. In the *Nights* "Tale of Hasan of Basra," the protagonist is abducted and sent to the top of a mountain in the claws of a rukh by an evil alchemist who needs ingredients for an elixir that can turn base metals into gold. Audiences for these tales would have seen this creature as one of the natural wonders of the world. Travel accounts testified to the existence of some kind of gigantic bird. Marco Polo mentions seeing a rukh with wing feathers twelve paces long. Ibn Battuta reports that he saw a rukh in the seas off China. Richard Burton points out that this fable appears in many cultures and is likely based on reminiscences of "gigantic pterodactyls and other winged monsters" since "man remembers and combines but does not create." Burton points to a huge bird that only recently had become extinct—the Aepyornis of Madagascar, "a gigantic ostrich whose egg contains 2.35 gallons" (vol. 7, pp. 16–17, n. 1).

31. *discovered that its soil was made of diamonds:* Similar locations are described by the Persian geographer al-Qazwini: "[T]he place in which the diamond is found, no one can gain access. It is a valley in the land of India, the bottom of which the sight reacheth not; and in it are venomous serpents which no one seeth but he dieth" (Lane, vol. 3, p. 93, n. 26). Marco Polo also described snake-infested mountains where diamonds could be found: "The persons who are in quest of the diamond take their stand near the mouths of the caverns, and from thence cast down several pieces of flesh, which the eagles and storks pursue into the valleys, and carry off with them to the tops of the rocks" (Lane, vol. 3, p. 94, n. 26). Tim Severin, the late writer and explorer who attempted to re-create Sinbad's voyages in 1980–81, argued that the valley of diamonds was in Sri Lanka, where precious stones are found on valley floors and dug up from pit shafts in the alluvial gravel. He claimed that snakes sometimes sought out the coolness of these pit shafts ("In the Wake of Sindbad," *National Geographic*, vol. 16, no. 1).

32. *I had heard from travelers and traders:* "The Story of Sinbad the Sailor" served as a repository for the information gathered by such travelers and traders—delivered in a form that entertained as well as enlightened. Medieval Arab travelogues of Asia refer self-consciously to the reports gathered from a network of merchant-informants. As Tim Mackintosh-Smith writes, "These are the true authors, this circle of ex-expatriates, old China and India hands back home, swapping memories of far-off lands like a coterie of Sindbads—and all the more wonderful for being real characters with real stories" (Introduction to Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī's *Accounts of China and India*, p. 7).

33. *and crammed my pockets:* Despite Sinbad's frequent despair, he gathers information, creates a plan, and embraces the risk necessary to survive. In this case, he is willing to be carried off by a giant rukh, but he first packs his pockets with gems because he never forgets the true objective of the trip. The exhilarating and horrifying moment when Sinbad takes flight made a deep impression on readers and was enhanced by many talented illustrators.

34. *"I am a man, a good one, and a merchant":* This is a fascinating declaration of the character's identity. He defends himself against any assumption that he is allied with demonic forces, and he sets out to show that he is a merchant—expecting that this is enough to yield favorable treatment.

35. *He thanked and blessed me:* Once again, the response of the other merchants is remarkably friendly. Bridget Orr argues that when this story was made into a pantomime for the English stage in the early nineteenth century, a greater attentiveness to issues of exploitation was read into these scenes. In *Harlequin Sindbad, or The Valley of the Diamonds* (1814), the playwright adds an evil merchant named Al-Avaricus, who steals the diamonds that Sinbad has brought with him from the valley floor and orders his slaves to throw him back down. The merchant is clearly marked as a villain by his ownership of slaves at a time when debates on the abolition of slavery were front-page news in Britain. This pantomime gave lower-class audiences in Britain a heroic Sinbad who acquires wealth through good luck and the magical aid of a female fairy and a villainous merchant who ultimately repents (pp. 128–29).

36. *We reached an area with a grove of camphor trees:* Edward Lane concludes from the mention of the camphor trees, the rhinoceros, and a "strange kind of buffalo" that the island is Sumatra (vol. 3, p. 95, n. 28). The description of extracting camphor from the tree can be seen as another useful piece of knowledge embedded in a fabulous travel tale. Burton notes that the procedure described was quite accurate (vol. 7, p. 21, n. 1).

37. *wild beast called karkadann:* The karkadann, a large horned beast believed to live on the grassy plains of India and Persia, has been taken to refer to a version of a rhinoceros. In his fourteenth-century travelogue, Ibn Battuta calls the rhinoceros he saw in India a karkadann and describes it as a ferocious beast, driving away from its territory animals as big as the elephant (Burton, vol. 7, p. 21, n. 2).

38. *in the horn there is a human shape:* "The text is a mélange of fantasy and real detail gleaned from geographers' accounts of the Indian Ocean," notes Yasmine Seale, and "crucial to its effect is this mix of strangeness and precise description."

39. *buying and selling until we reached Basra:* In the tales of Sinbad, the journey home is always uneventful. Once Sinbad resolves to return to the peace of Baghdad, the seas become quiet and the way opens before him.

40. *bewildered by what he had survived:* The porter is the imagined audience for these tales, but he has analogues inside the tales as Sinbad tells his stories of misadventures to the people he encounters. Each story is sure to evoke amazement. The entertainment provided by the traveler returning from abroad was a trope mirrored in the English novel as it responded to imperial mobility in the Victorian age. In her serial novel *Cranford* (1851–53), Elizabeth Gaskell associates the return of Peter Jenkyns from India with the arrival of Sinbad. His "so very Oriental" presence causes great excitement among the ladies of Cranford, for he "told more

wonderful stories than Sindbad the Sailor, and, as Miss Pole said, was quite as good as an Arabian Night any evening" (chap. 16). Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817) also contains a romantic figure, Frederick Wentworth, who makes his fortune through maritime adventures.

41. *my third voyage is even stranger than the last:* Mia Gerhardt argues that the voyages of Sinbad follow a consistent pattern. On each voyage, Sinbad and his companions will encounter some unexpected disaster, and this will lead to either one or several adventures before a quick return journey. She also argues that the peak of intensity is reached in the third, fourth, and fifth voyages—the middle of the story cycle. This, she suggests, is an unusual structure that is not common in Western literature, which typically positions the most suspenseful events within a final climax (pp. 255–56). Richard Burton complained about this unfamiliar structure and argued that the rukh, the giant, and the Old Man of the Sea should come last in the cycle of voyages (vol. 6, p. 77).

42. *the soul bends to bad things:* It is unlikely that Sinbad is suggesting that the impulse to trade and make a profit is "a bad thing." More likely, he is retrospectively admitting that, since he had already attained great wealth by this stage, taking additional risks was not a wise decision.

43. *merchants who seemed to be decent, men of belief and honor:* Sinbad teaches a lesson on how to choose good associates if they want to pursue the life of the merchant. Within this list, the common faith of Islam is important, for it dictates a set of values and behaviors that could facilitate exchange with traders in distant territories.

44. *"Mountain of the Apes":* A "mountain of the apes" also features in "The Tale of Sayf al-Muluk." In this *Nights* tale, a prince is searching for the jinni princess with whom he has fallen in love after seeing her picture, and he is shipwrecked on a mountain described in this way. Edward Lane cites the account of Ibn al-Wardi, who mentions an "Isle of Apes" in the Sea of China, and al-Idrisi, who claims this island is two days' sail from Socotra, but Lane assumes the island of the third voyage is Sumatra, especially because, in two other editions of the story, the apes are described as "red downy creatures," like the orangutans of Sumatra (vol. 3, p. 96, n. 38).

45. *we saw descend a figure of enormous size in the likeness of a man:* Antoine Galland was the first to note the echo here of Odysseus's confrontation with the Cyclops Polyphemus in *The Odyssey*. In his translation, he ensures that this connection will be made by the reader by describing the giant as having one eye. It is impossible to assert a direct influence of *The Odyssey* on "Sinbad the Sailor," for both works may have been influenced by an earlier tradition. English translators such as Lane and Burton follow Galland in this association, and also note that John Mandeville claimed that one-eyed giants fifty feet high inhabited one of the Indian islands, eating nothing but raw flesh and raw fish (Lane, vol. 3, p. 97, n. 39; Burton, vol. 6, p. 24, n. 2). The convention of making the giant a Cyclops carried over into cinema when Roy Harryhausen created his monster for *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958). DreamWorks's animated *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003) takes its cue from the similarities between Sinbad and Odysseus and sets his adventures in a world of classical mythology. Sinbad is tempted by sirens, and his antagonist is Eris, the Greek goddess of discord.

46. *He felt us one by one:* The narrator carefully describes each step as the giant prepares to consume his meal—building suspense and intensifying the horror of the listener. The translator's art is evident in the use of "trouble" for the half-rhyme with "feeble" and the double sense of worry and difficulty.

47. *better than to die in fire, an abominable death:* In Islam, cremation is considered a violation of the dignity of the body.

48. *“let us take these planks and firewood”:* As in the Valley of the Diamonds, Sindbad comes up with a plan rather than giving in to despair. In this sense, he might be compared to the cunning Odysseus.

49. *took up two iron spits:* Yasmine Seale’s translation follows the original and makes it clear that this is not a Cyclops, but rather a giant with two eyes. “The Tale of Sayf al-Muluk” also includes an encounter with a cannibal ghoul who is blinded by a red-hot spit thrust into both his eyes. The protagonist’s friend Said then delivers a fatal blow to the ghoul but resists the urge to hit him again because a second blow would have revived the evil creature.

50. *Soon we were woken by a serpent:* The huge serpents on this island are one of the elements this story shares with the ancient Egyptian tale of “The Shipwrecked Sailor,” except in the latter, the serpent speaks and helps the protagonist to safety. Al-Qazwini reports that in the Sea of China there are “two enormous serpents, that come forth upon the land, and one of them will swallow the buffalo or the elephant, and wind itself round a tree or rock, and so break in pieces the bones of the animal in its belly” (Lane, vol. 3, p. 98, n. 43).

51. *“I am that Sinbad!”:* Once again, Sinbad has incredible luck, and somehow he is reunited with his goods. The merchants give another object lesson in honorable behavior.

52. *“it is clear he tells the truth”:* Sinbad convinces the merchants of his identity through the telling of tales. In the *Arabian Nights*, you are the story you tell.

53. *I saw many strange and curious things:* Once again, the tale is a repository for a series of wonders reported by travelers in the Arab world. The report of a fish in the form of a cow is contained in the works of both al-Qazwini and Ibn al-Wardi, but Burton is certain that this is a hippopotamus (Lane, vol. 3, p. 98, n. 49; Burton, vol. 6, p. 33, n. 1). The donkey-shaped creature is mentioned in Pliny, but Burton claims this must be a confusion with a manatee, seal, or dugong. He also notes that wild legends about the barnacle goose or the albatross could be the basis for the bird mentioned in this passage (Burton, vol. 6, p. 33, n. 2, 3).

54. *I gave alms and clothed the widows and orphans:* Sinbad is teaching his listeners how to use their wealth responsibly, in accordance with Islam.

55. *Then Sinbad the Sailor gave Sinbad the Porter a hundred coins of gold:* The repetition of such phrases gives a distinctive rhythm to the cycle of stories. James Joyce, a devoted reader of Burton’s *Arabian Nights*, recognized the multiplying logic by which the tale expands. The features of Sinbad are woven into the character of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, along with references to Odysseus. At the end of the “Ithaca” chapter, Joyce includes this passage as Bloom lies in bed with Molly after his day’s journey: “He has travelled,” but with whom? The answer is “Sinbad the Sailor and Tinbad the Tailor and Jinbad the Jailer and Whinbad the Whaler and Ninbad the Nailer and Finbad the Failer and Binbad the Bailer and Pinbad the Pailer and Minbad the Mailer and Hinbad the Hailer and Rinbad the Railer and Dinbad the Kailer and Vinbad the Quailer and Linbad the Yailer and Xinbad the Phthailer.” The list seems to replicate endlessly—repeating the serial quality of the tales of Sinbad and the multiplication of his identity in the

character of Sinbad the Porter and the characters of Tinbad and Whinbad, who appear in the British pantomime based on the story.

56. *my bad soul whispered that we should go across the sea:* At the beginning of each journey, Seale varies the way in which the urge to travel takes hold of Sinbad. Here his soul longs for trade and profit as expected, but the lure of “other faces” has also taken root. Bruno Bettelheim argues that the two sides of Sinbad are in conflict. While the ego might recognize that he should be satisfied with his life of luxury in Baghdad, the id pushes Sinbad to escape from ordinary life into fantasies of adventure (pp. 83–85).

57. *a tempest rose and tore the sails to strips:* The storm at sea served as a key theme in Rimsky-Korsakov’s symphonic suite *Schéhérazade* (1888). The first movement was given the title “The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship,” and the composer came back to these themes in the fourth movement as “Shipwreck” (Al-Taee, pp. 268–69).

58. *their minds went blank:* This incident is reminiscent of the episode of the lotus eaters in *The Odyssey*. Those commentators more interested in finding a factual basis for this scene suggest that the food must have been laced with a drug known to produce intoxication, such as hemp, henbane, or opium (Lane, vol. 3, p. 100, n. 52; Burton, vol. 6, p. 36, n. 1).

59. *I found that they were Magians:* The pre-Islamic faith of Zoroastrianism is often associated with evil in the *Nights*, and, in this case, the sense of danger is compounded by the evil influence of a ghoul, a creature known to feed on human flesh. This episode is related to stories of both Ibn al-Wardi and al-Qazwini, who relates an anecdote from an escapee from captivity on the island of Seksar, who claimed that his fellows were fattened up and then slaughtered and eaten (Lane, vol. 3, p. 100, n. 52).

60. *I saw a herdsman:* This time, Sinbad benefits from the aid of a helpful herdsman, but he has to be smart enough to understand his cues to find his way to civilization.

61. *saw his city:* The description of this city perfectly encapsulates the preferences of the merchant narrator and his audience for the busy urban environment with its richly stocked markets. The contrast between the civilized center of trade and the dangerous wilderness is central to the story of Sinbad’s voyages.

62. *showed him how to make a saddle:* Sinbad gives prospective merchants among his listeners an object lesson in the entrepreneurial spirit. Despite all he has suffered, Sinbad finds a way to make a profit.

63. *At these words, I was embarrassed:* In typical fashion, Richard Burton finds Sinbad’s reaction to the prospect of marriage amusing: “Our Arabian Ulysses had probably left a Penelope or two at home and finds a Calypso in this Ogygia. His modesty at the mention of womankind is notable” (vol. 6, p. 40, n. 1).

64. *“the custom of our country”:* Both Lane and Burton assumed this was a reference to the practice of *sati* among some Hindus (Lane, vol. 3, p. 101, n. 55; Burton, vol. 6, p. 41, n. 3), although *sati* involved the widow sacrificing herself on her husband’s funeral pyre, not the reverse. This custom was appropriated in a melodrama by English dramatist Prince Hoare in 1796. In *Mahmoud*, a faithless, greedy character ends up interred with his dead wife, but he is

later rescued by the woman he had once abandoned. Bridget Orr argues that this was a useful plot device to turn the attention of the British audience to issues of unjust imprisonment in a moment when they were reacting to the excesses of the French Revolution (Orr, p. 112).

65. *“better than this awful death”:* In a similar tale collected by the Grimm brothers, “The Three Snake-Leaves,” the hero is lowered into the crypt along with his dead wife, but he learns from a serpent how to use three leaves to resuscitate her. There is no happy ending. Revived, she finds she no longer loves him and has him killed at the first opportunity, thrown overboard on a sea voyage. In the end, after the protagonist’s servant revives him with the three leaves, his wife’s actions are revealed and she is condemned to death by drowning.

66. *I stared at the woman:* At this moment, Sinbad makes the decision to become a murderer. It is a critical point in the story—virtually at the midpoint of the seven voyages—and it complicates evaluations of Sinbad’s character. Mia Gerhardt defends Sinbad, presenting him as a heroic figure and a pious man who resorts to murder only when he finds it absolutely necessary. In this fourth voyage, “the peaceable man turns ferocious” under pressure of starvation. Peter Molan disagrees with Gerhardt’s assessment. He believes the stories contain an ironic recognition of Sinbad’s failure to live up to the ethical principles professed elsewhere in the story. Sinbad’s merciless pursuit of his own interests culminates, he suggests, in the murder of innocent people, even after he has found his way out of the tomb (p. 339).

67. *I took her bread:* Sinbad cuts a much more sympathetic figure in the retelling by Hanan al-Shaykh. She imbues him with deep grief for the loss of his foreign wife—he weeps over her grave as she is lowered—and genuine repentance for his crime: “Then he knelt and asked for God’s forgiveness, explaining to the Almighty that he had committed this bad deed because he needed to be with his family, whereas the widow’s family had sent her to her death willingly if not gladly” (p. 281). Sinbad’s love for his family redeems him in al-Shaykh’s version of the tale.

68. *I killed the person buried alive:* In some analogues of this tale, the hero does not kill the widow he encounters in the pit but instead the two escape together. In a “Judeo-Spanish” version, a seven-headed monster that steals their food pulls them out of the pit (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 99).

69. *killed whoever had been buried:* An earlier, and oddly happier, Persian tale bears striking similarities to Sinbad’s fourth voyage: “After some time, carnal desire troubled me, as I was young. So I asked their king for a bride. They had the custom that if the husband would die sooner [than the wife], they would bury the wife alive together with him; and when the wife died [sooner], they would bury the husband alive [together with her]. After a certain time, my wife fell ill…. When I returned home, my wife had died. They lifted her up, took me along, and brought us to that cave. With a rope they let me down and blocked the entrance of the cave…. And when every two days they threw someone down there alive, I killed that person with my knife and took the supplies of three days bread and water, until one day they deposited in that cave my former wife’s sister alive, together with her dead husband. When she saw me, she recognized me and consented to marry me. I slept with her and had several children with her. Some time later I started to dig the ground in the corner of the cave with my knife until I made a hole to the side of the sea. Every day I would sit there, until I finally saw a ship….” (Marzolph, “An Early Persian Precursor to the Tales of Sindbād the Seafaring Merchant,” p. 133).

70. *“I am a merchant”:* This time, when Sinbad is asked about his identity, he lies instead of telling the story that would accurately represent who he is. He edits out his life in the foreign city and his marriage, as well as the violent acts he has committed since his interment. He also passes off his stolen goods as his own, in a major violation of the merchants’ code. Sinbad’s lies and crimes in the voyage contrast with the virtues of truth-telling and self-sacrifice that Hollywood has sought to superimpose upon his roguish charm. Sinbad forsakes material wealth and worldly power in film after film—from Douglas Fairbanks Jr.’s *Sinbad the Sailor* (1947) to Ray Harryhausen’s special effects–laden trilogy to DreamWorks’s animated fantasy.

71. *“We take nothing from anyone”:* Sinbad has once again stumbled upon seafarers who behave with incredible generosity toward him—practicing charity in accordance with the tenets of their religion. This welcome contrasts strongly with Sinbad’s recent behavior.

72. *began again to whisper of the sea:* Seale finds another variation to express the temptation to travel. There is no longer a mention of the profit to be made, only the need to see foreign lands. Despite the resonances that critics have seen between Sinbad and Odysseus, Sinbad sets out on his journey with very different motives. If Odysseus is making his way home after long years of war, Sinbad has succumbed to the lure of novel vistas. Ferial Ghazoul argues that “Sindbad is a strange hero, for unlike Ulysses, he leaves not because of a lack (except for the first voyage), but because of an abundance. He had everything that he desires, yet he always departs” (p. 69).

73. *the young rukh appeared inside:* The rukh reappears in this voyage, but it serves a different function than it did in the second voyage. Another tale in the *1001 Nights*, “‘Abdal-Rahmanal-Maghribi’s Story of the Rukh,” explains the popular belief that any man who eats meat from a rukh chick will ensure that his beard does not turn gray. This tale is also related as true in Ibn al-Wardi’s work. H. G. Wells took up the idea of a rukh’s egg found on a desert island (along with Burton’s explanation of this legend) for a short story that he published in 1894. In that story, a character named Butcher finds three eggs on the island of Madagascar. He eats two, but one hatches in the tropical heat and becomes a fourteen-foot-tall bird—an extinct species called the Aepyornis. At first, the bird is a companion for the lonely man, but when it becomes aggressive, the man kills it (“Aepyornis Island,” in *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents*).

74. *Then the female bird threw her rock:* In “‘Abd al-Rahman al-Maghribi’s Story of the Rukh,” the bird approached the ship “coming down like a vast cloud, having in its claw a fragment of a mountain, like an enormous house, and bigger than the ship.” The narrator claims he was only saved from destruction by God (Lane, vol. 3, p. 103, n. 62). In the film *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), Sinbad’s crew break open a rukh egg and roast the newborn bird for food. The rukh returns to kill Sinbad’s men and drop Sinbad from a great height.

75. *I gave thanks to God:* Sinbad once again gives thanks to God for the wonders that he finds, but the piety that he shows on this voyage sits uneasily with the events of the previous one.

76. *“Sheikh, why do you sit here”: Sheikh* is simply a respectful title for an older man in this context.

77. *But he did not get off:* The Old Man of the Sea appears in the work of al-Qazwini, who describes an island with “a people in the form of men who have no bones in their legs.” Their custom is to “drag themselves along,” and when they find a man, they “leap upon his neck” and ride him like a beast. Lane believed that the Old Man of the Sea referred to the orangutans of

Sumatra. He quotes Richard Hole in support: “It is to be observed, that he never speaks, but expresses his meaning by gesticulation; he lives on fruits; the skin of his legs resembles that of a cow [or buffalo]; and his winding them round [Sinbad’s] neck is consistent with the pliability of limb belonging to that animal” (Lane, vol. 3, p. 104, n. 64).

78. *he beat me like a captive:* Joseph Conrad used the image of the Old Man of the Sea repeatedly in his letters and fiction. In *Nostromo*, the Old Man represents the burden of the silver-mining concession on the Gould family. When Gould Senior inherits the mine, “[I]t took to his mind the form of the Old Man of the Sea fastened upon his shoulders” (pp. 55–56). The same image reappears when his son inherits the concession. The Old Man of the Sea is used for political purposes in Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour’s *Siraaj* (1992). The novel follows a pearl diver who returns to his island (perhaps Zanzibar) to confront an autocratic ruler. He dreams one night of being Sinbad and being choked by a man who rides upon his shoulders, wrapping his legs around his neck while insulting and beating him. He imagines it is the brutal captain of the fishing boat who mistreats his crew, but his mentor suggests the Old Man represents the sultan himself, and the dream prophesies his downfall (Ghazoul, p. 248).

79. *struck him on the head as he lay sleeping:* The contradiction between Sinbad’s assertion that his wealth has been justly earned and his descent into violence in voyages four and five has been pointed out by critics such as Peter Molan. Despite Sinbad’s constant evocation of Allah, and his demonstration of piety through charitable acts, Molan stresses that he contravenes Islamic ideals in dramatic fashion, and this creates a subtle imputation of hypocrisy. Just as Shahriyar justifies his own murders, Sinbad the Sailor returns home to tell stories to Sinbad the Porter to justify his own actions, and he tries to alleviate his bad conscience with charitable acts. If Shahrazad is telling these stories to the king, perhaps she hopes that he will see his reflection in this mirror.

80. *“The Old Man of the Sea”:* The Old Man of the Sea also appears in “The Tale of Sayf al-Muluk,” after the prince is shipwrecked on his way from China to India, but his victim is one of the prince’s slaves.

81. *“Teach this stranger”:* Sinbad again receives kindness and aid from the strangers that he meets in this distant city. This network of mutual aid might have reassured aspiring merchants that the wider world was more hospitable than they imagined.

82. *an island rich in cinnamon and pepper:* Following Richard Hole’s suggestion, Lane thinks this is an island near the Sunda Strait (Lane, vol. 3, p. 106, n. 67).

83. *God had rewarded me with four times what I had lost:* Peter Molan believes these moments contain intentional irony, since Sinbad’s actions contradict his presumed ethical state. He speculates that when the tale is told in the voice of Shahrazad, it “becomes a parable for the instruction of King Shahriyar in self-deception and injustice” (Molan, p. 327).

84. *We sailed from place to place:* John Barth pokes fun at the formula in Sinbad’s voyages in his 2015 novel *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor*. By the “next-to-last voyage,” Sinbad’s journey seems to be “little more than a replay” of the previous five: “He goes down per usual from the city of Baghdad to the port of Basra. Per usual he sets out (but this time with a particular urgency, explain anon) with a clutch of other merchants, to score in the silk-and-spice trade, or whatever. Their captain loses his way, per usual; the usual storm disables their vessel and piles her up on some uncharted island. Most of the passengers and crew go under, but old Sindbad, as

he'll tell it, is so accustomed to this routine by now that as soon as the skipper admits they're lost, he climbs into his faithful laundry tub, his Tub of Last Resort, and waits on the afterdeck for the squall and the foundering. He makes it to shore, as always, this time with a handful of others, whose next job in his story is to die and leave him the sole survivor" (p. 17).

85. *All the people wept and said farewell:* Calamity once again befalls Sinbad and his companions, but he will somehow persevere. Sinbad's response to adversity was seen as exemplary by Palestinian poet Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: "His vision is all men's dream: his ship is wrecked, his fellow-travelers drown, death and horror overtake the world, but Sindbad battles on and survives" (Molan, pp. 327–28).

86. *I was among those who landed on the island:* Lane believes that Sinbad's ship has been wrecked on the coast of Sri Lanka, which was famous for its gemstones. Marco Polo claimed that the island "produces more beautiful and valuable rubies than are found in any other part of the world, and likewise sapphires, topazes, amethysts, garnets, and many other precious and costly stones" (Lane, vol. 3, p. 107, n. 73, 75).

87. *a spring of crude ambergris:* The travel account of Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī (written sometime between 884 and 944 CE) describes the gathering of ambergris on the shores of East Africa. On "moonlit nights," he writes, the people of these regions ride the shore with camels specially trained "to scan the shore for ambergris, and, when they spot some, they kneel so that their riders can dismount and pick it up. Ambergris is also found floating on the surface of the sea in lumps of great weight, sometimes up to the size of a bull" (*Accounts of China and India*, pp. 125–27).

88. *delighting in the works of God:* Despite all he has seen and all he has suffered, Sinbad still displays wonder as he finds himself in new lands.

89. *for having ever left my country:* In each voyage, Sinbad finds a new way to express the deep despair into which his trials have thrown him. This exemplifies the imitation and variation pattern that runs through the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*. This time, Sinbad acknowledges the fact that he does not need to seek more wealth by trading in distant realms. He must somehow abandon the lure of travel.

90. *"Leave the house to mourn its builder":* These lines of poetry are also delivered by the executioner in "The Tale of the First Dervish." After sparing the life of the young prince, the executioner urges him to flee the kingdom. Here Sinbad must save himself.

91. *around me Indians and Abyssinians:* Sinbad is imagined to be in Sri Lanka at this point in his journey. Burton explains that when southern India was being explored by Vasco da Gama, there were many Abyssinian slaves who had been brought there by Arab traders (Burton, vol. 6, p. 63, n. 2).

92. *"the caliph in Baghdad":* The legend of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid is brought into Sinbad's tale to emphasize the appeal of home. This ties the voyages firmly to the nostalgic myth of a Baghdad defined by peace and justice.

93. *"I long for my people and my country":* For Bruno Bettelheim, Sinbad's homesickness is merely the ego reasserting itself. Sinbad is ready to return to reality after pursuing the desires of the id in a reckless way.

94. *There I sought an audience with the caliph:* In some versions of this story, after Sinbad delivers the gifts to the caliph, he is summoned before Harun al-Rashid to explain where they came from. Sinbad has to admit that he does not know the name of the city or the way back to it. After narrating the story of his voyage, “the caliph marvelled exceedingly, and he ordered the historians to record my story and deposit it in his library, so that whoever reads it might be edified by it” (Haddawy, p. 44). This is one of several moments in the *Nights* when the value of stories is acknowledged by an order to preserve them in the treasury of the king.

95. *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad:* The Arabic edition of the *One Thousand and One Nights* known as Calcutta II, edited in India by William Macnaghten, contains a different version of Sinbad’s seventh voyage. In that story, the caliph sends Sinbad back to the King of Sarandib (Sri Lanka) with presents and a letter. When he gets there, he goes on a hunt for elephant tusks and finds a huge elephant cemetery.

96. *longing for the sea, the company of merchants, and the sight of other skies:* As Sinbad begins this last voyage, the attraction is clearly the joy of travel.

97. *until we passed the City of China:* This is likely a distorted reference to an important port city like Guangzhou prominently mentioned in Arab travelogues of China. In *Accounts of China and India* (written in the late eighth or early ninth century), this city is identified as a port where ships might anchor and take on fresh water (p. 35).

98. *“All this is God’s design”:* This last voyage does not contain the kinds of horrific threats and amazing creatures of previous journeys, and Mia Gerhardt argues that the diminishing danger and wonder of the last two voyages help Sinbad reconcile himself to the idea of giving up his life of travel (p. 256).

99. *a large and pretty city:* Once again, arrival at a city signifies that Sinbad has reached an abode of safety and kindness.

100. *“I would like to marry her to you”:* Just as in the fourth voyage, Sinbad is a passive party in making a marriage.

101. *“This is your property to do with as you please”:* This city shares Sinbad’s understanding of the value of property. Again, the old man’s respect and generosity are remarkable.

102. *They would grow wings:* The sudden appearance of a fantastical element in the last voyage seems to inspire less wonder in Sinbad and brings up the question of religious faith in a more direct way than in previous adventures.

103. *we flew so high I heard the angels praising God:* According to superstition, the jinn were believed to fly close enough to the lowest levels of heaven to listen in on the conversations of angels and learn about the future. It is unclear what the winged creatures are in this case, but the sudden fiery punishment that comes when Sinbad utters the phrase, “Glory be to God,” seems to indicate that these are not creatures who serve God but some kind of demonic force. A similar consequence occurs in “The Tale of the Second Dervish,” when the boat of the mysterious brass rower capsizes after the prince invokes God.

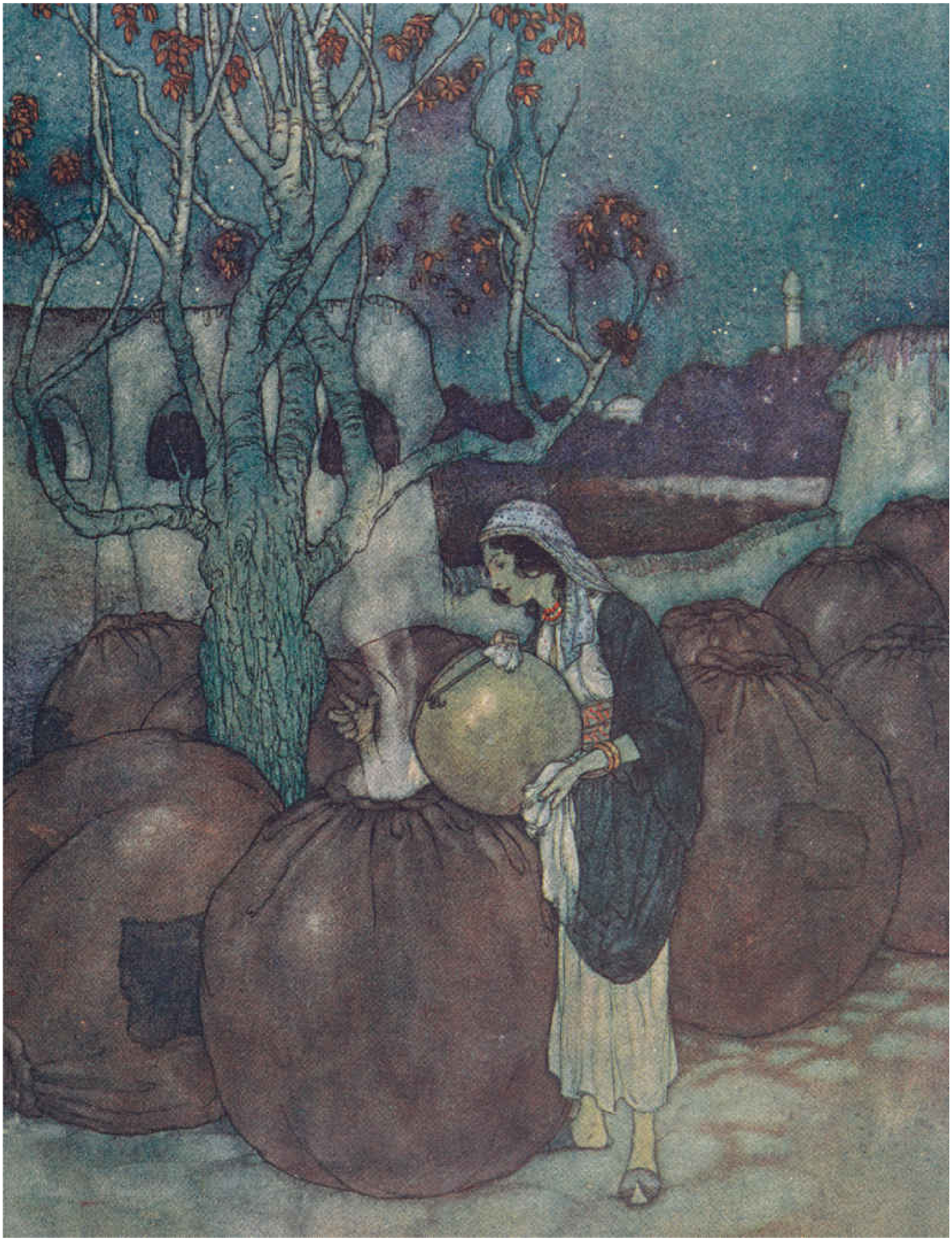
104. *I struck the serpent with my rod of gold:* Once again, Sinbad receives unsolicited aid from a stranger—this time of a supernatural kind—in a sign that destiny has favored him.

105. *“They are brothers of the devil”:* The flying men are confirmed as evil spirits in league with the devil rather than servants of God. This close encounter with forces that represent evil in its most essential form finally proves sufficient to persuade Sinbad to abandon his quest for foreign lands and faces.

106. *At the story’s end:* In this version of the tales of Sinbad, we do not learn how Sinbad the Porter responded to all the stories of the merchant, but a bond seems to have formed between the two men. In another manuscript of this story, Sinbad the Porter replies to Sinbad the Sailor’s tale-telling with an apology for questioning whether he was in fact deserving of such wealth when others had to struggle for their survival. This supports an interpretation of the tale as a defense of the practices of the merchant class. The story of Sinbad has been seen as an extended argument for the merchant’s right to the wealth earned through ingenuity and perseverance—a defense of the value system of a class of people who formed an important part of the audience for the *Nights.*

II.

TALES FROM FRENCH



Marjana pours boiling oil on the thieves. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

THE STORY OF ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES[1]

The appeal of this famous story is typically associated with Ali Baba's rise from poverty to wealth, but in its original form, it was a story of the heroism of Marjana, the slave girl who proves her superiority to her masters and the robbers who menace them. The story was first narrated by Hanna Diyab to Antoine Galland in 1709, and its roots lie in the narrative traditions of Syria, where Diyab was raised in the caravan city of Aleppo and where stories flowed through trade networks linking East and West. In telling this tale, Diyab took several existing story motifs from the folklore of his region and ingeniously wove them together into the first documented version of a tale that has been admired by readers for three centuries.

The first part of the tale draws on existing folk traditions that feature a cave filled with food (and sometimes treasure) and inhabited by dangerous creatures (ogres or jinn in other versions). When the cave is discovered, the protagonist undergoes a version of an appetite test to see whether he will be able to restrain his own greedy impulses or will succumb and be punished for it. It is clear from Galland's notes that Diyab's tale included this emphasis on food as the temptation that must be resisted, but, in the French version, the emphasis is shifted to the heaps of silver and gold within the cave. Diyab has intertwined this motif with the prominent theme of envy in the Nights *by including two brothers (and their respective wives) and contrasting the success of Ali Baba with the failure of his greedy brother Qasim.*

If the first part of this tale has one notable supernatural element in the formulaic phrase used to open the cave entrance—the classic “Open, Sesame!” that has become part of popular culture—the second part is rooted in realistic narratives involving the motif of the crafty thief. This element of the story can be traced back to the tale of Pharaoh Rhampsinitus and the master thief originally recorded by Herodotus in the fifth century BCE. The ancient tale features two brothers who steal from the pharaoh’s treasury until one gets caught and the other has to decapitate him to escape detection. The surviving brother then goes on to demonstrate his skills of deception as he retrieves his brother’s body and eludes the pharaoh’s soldiers. Diyab seems to have taken this story pattern and combined it with another one that focused on the role of the “clever maiden”—in this case, the character of Marjana.

The second half of the tale of Ali Baba highlights the cleverness of Marjana in seeing through the disguises of the robbers and devising her own ingenious stratagems to win the day. For Mia Gerhardt, the story has all the structural characteristics of a contemporary crime story: “logical development, functionality of all the details, strict economy of means, and a closed plot in which neither chance nor supernatural elements nor even destiny influence the outcome” (p. 180). If Ali Baba’s success is due to his ability to pass the appetite test, the family’s survival in the second part of the story is due to Marjana’s ingenious efforts to outwit the robbers and keep secret the source of the family’s newfound riches. In this respect, the story resembles other tales in the One Thousand and One Nights *that feature the bravery and wit of female slaves—for instance, “The Tale of ‘Ali Shar and Zumurrud,” in which Zumurrud engineers her own escapes from jeopardy before being reunited with her beloved.*

While the narrative skills evident in the tale of Ali Baba and Marjana were once credited to Galland, new research confirms that the essential elements of the tale were the creation of Hanna Diyab. Mohamed Abdel-Halim’s careful reading of Galland’s diary entries even suggests that Diyab may have provided an Arabic text of the story to the French translator. However the tale was transmitted, Diyab must receive the credit for this rich realization of the story. After its publication in Galland’s Les mille et une nuits *in 1717, “Ali Baba” entered oral narrative culture, and more than six hundred different retellings of the story were recorded by the* *middle of the nineteenth century (Marzolph,* 101 Middle Eastern Tales, *p. 237). The tale also flourished on the page and on the stage—from early chapbooks for children to popular pantomime spectacles—and ultimately became the first film based on a tale from the* Arabian Nights *when Thomas Edison produced* Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *in 1902.*

SHAHRAZAD, AWAKENED IN the night by her sister, told the sultan the story she had promised him.

Majesty, there lived in Persia, at the edge of Your Majesty's kingdom, two brothers, one named Qasim and the other Ali Baba. Their father had left them very little, and neither received more than the other, so their fortunes should have been equal, but chance dealt them different fates.[2]

Qasim married a woman who, not long after their union, inherited some land and two shops well supplied with goods, and he soon became one of the wealthiest merchants in the city.[3] Ali Baba, whose wife was no richer than he was, lived in poverty and kept his family alive by chopping timber in a nearby forest and taking it to market on three mules, which were all he owned.

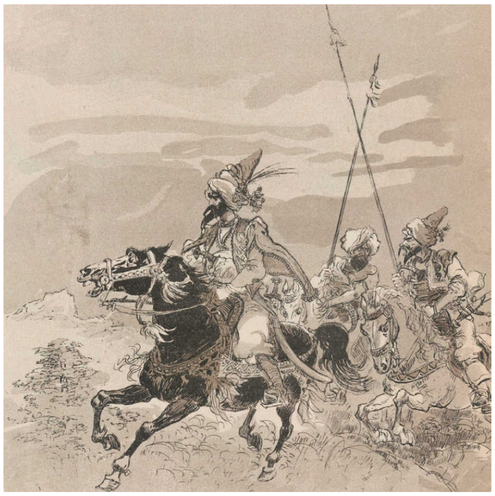
One day, Ali Baba was in the forest, loading his beasts with the day's wood, when he noticed a cloud of dust rising toward him. Through narrowed eyes, he made out a band of men on horseback charging at full gallop.

It occurred to Ali Baba, without knowing why, that the riders might be thieves.[4] Abandoning his mules, he thought only of saving himself, and he climbed into a tree at the foot of a rock too craggy to scale. There, concealed by densely crowded branches, he looked out.

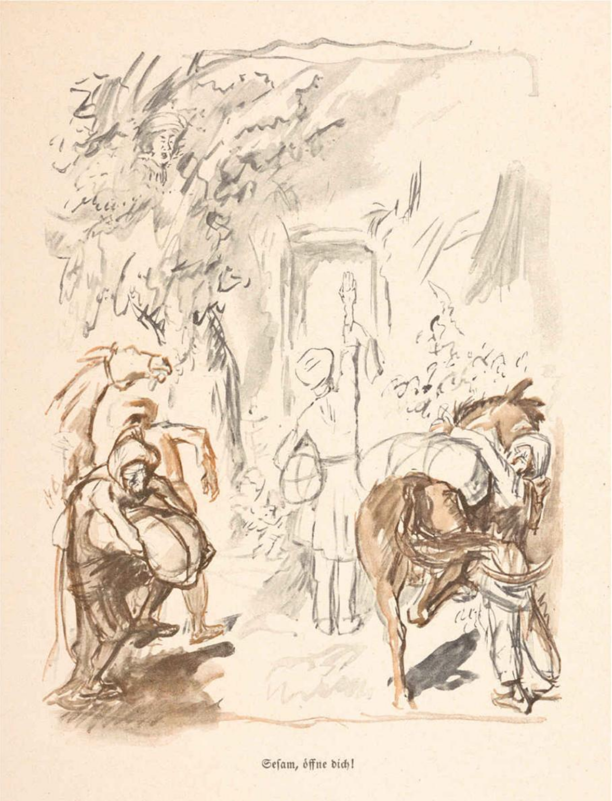
When the riders reached the crag and dismounted, Ali Baba counted forty men. Watching them—tall, tough, and armed—he guessed that he had been right. These were outlaws who had left their neighborhoods and traveled far to plunder. They unbridled their horses, tied them to trees, and fed them from sacks of barley they had brought on their backs. Then they unloaded their bags, which looked so heavy that he thought they must be full of gold and silver.

Ali Baba watched the most striking man, whom he took to be their captain, make his way through the bushes beneath his tree, and by the rock he heard him say the words, "Open, Sesame!"[5] A door opened in the rock and, having made his men enter, he followed them and the door closed behind him.

The thieves stayed for some time inside, and Ali Baba, fearing that they might burst out again if he tried to leave, was forced to sit patiently in the tree. He was tempted to slip down and ride away on one of the horses, leading another one alongside and chasing his mules ahead of him, but nerves kept him frozen to the bough.



Ali Baba saw a band of men approaching on horseback. Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*


Seſam, öffne dich!

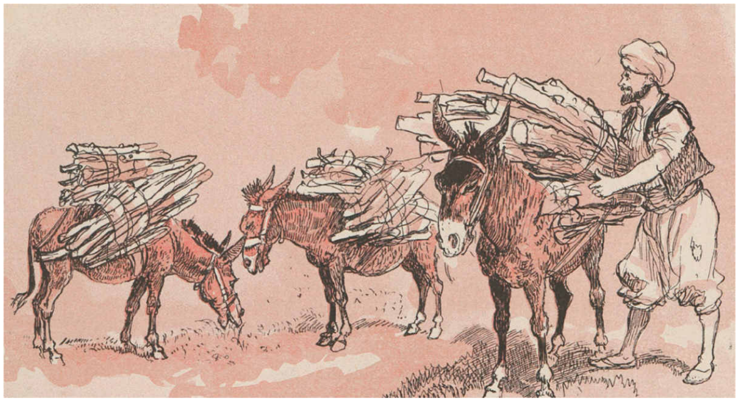
Ali Baba heard the captain say “Open, Sesame!” Illustration by Max Slevogt, from Ali Baba und die vierzig Räuber *(Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1903). The German Impressionist artist Max Slevogt exhibited his painting* Scheherazade *(1897) at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900 before turning to illustrating the story of Ali Baba.*

At last the door opened. The captain was the first to emerge, and when the forty thieves were out, he said, “Close, Sesame!” and the door shut. Every man returned to his horse, bridled it and mounted, and their captain led them off the way they had come.

Fearing that some oversight would bring them charging back, Ali Baba was slow to climb down from his tree. Long after the men had ridden out of sight, he descended and, curious to try the effect of the captain’s words, he went looking for the door behind the bushes. When he reached it, he said, “Open, Sesame!”[6] and the door was thrown wide.

He expected darkness, but this was a vast, bright place lit by an opening in the ceiling, which human hands had hollowed into a vault. He saw piles of food,[7] bales of rich merchandise, silk and brocade, fine carpets, and enormous leather sacks spilling gold and silver. It seemed to him that centuries of thieves had used this as their lair.

Ali Baba entered the cave and the door closed behind him, but he knew its secret and pressed on, untroubled. He did not look at the silver but collected as much gold[8] as he thought his three mules could carry. Then he loaded them with the loot, which he hid under logs, and with the words, "Close, Sesame!" he shut the door and returned to the city.



Ali Baba hid the loot under the logs. Illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

At home, Ali Baba drove his mules into the barn, left the logs there, then took the bags indoors to his wife and laid them out on the sofa. Believing he had stolen them, she opened her mouth to protest, but Ali Baba cut her off.

"I am no thief,"[9] he said, "unless it is theft to steal from thieves. See how lucky I have been."

He emptied the bags before her, and, after relating his adventure, warned her to keep the secret. His wife, cured of her disapproval, fell on the gold to count it.

"We have no time to lose," said Ali Baba. "I will dig a hole and bury it."

"We would be wise to measure it," replied his wife. "I will go and borrow a measure from a neighbor while you dig."

"Do as you please," he said, "but keep the secret."[10]

She went to see her brother-in-law, Qasim, who lived nearby. He was not home, so she asked his wife if she might quickly borrow a measure.

"Large or small?" said her sister-in-law.

"Small," came the answer.

“Of course,” said Qasim’s wife. “One moment.”

She went to fetch one,[11] but knowing Ali Baba’s poverty, and wondering what sort of grain his wife wished to use, she rubbed a little suet on the bottom of the measure. Then she brought it to her sister-in-law, with apologies for having made her wait. She had struggled to find it.

Ali Baba’s wife returned home with the measure and counted out the gold. Then, while her husband buried it, she carried the measure back to her sister-in-law. In her haste to return it promptly, however, she failed to see that a gold coin had stuck to the bottom.

“Sister-in-law,” said Ali Baba’s wife, “you see that I did not keep your measure for long. Here it is, with my gratitude.”

She had hardly turned to leave when Qasim’s wife, inspecting the measure, spotted the gold coin and was amazed. Envy gripped her heart.[12]

“Ali Baba has gold by the measure!” she said. “Where has that wretch found gold?”

She burned to tell her husband, who was in his shop and would not be home before evening. The afternoon ahead seemed to her a century.

When at last he returned, she said, “Qasim, you think you are rich, but your brother is infinitely richer. He does not count his gold like you, he measures it.”

He asked her to explain this riddle, and she told him by what ruse she had discovered the coin in the measure, a coin so ancient[13] that the name of the prince inscribed on it was unknown to her.

Far from rejoicing in the good fortune that had lifted his brother out of poverty, Qasim became so jealous he could not sleep. He went to his brother before sunrise, though he no longer called him by that name[14] since marrying the rich woman.

“Ali Baba,” he said, “you are full of secrets. You claim to be poor and yet you measure gold.”

“Brother,” said Ali Baba, “I am not sure what you mean.”

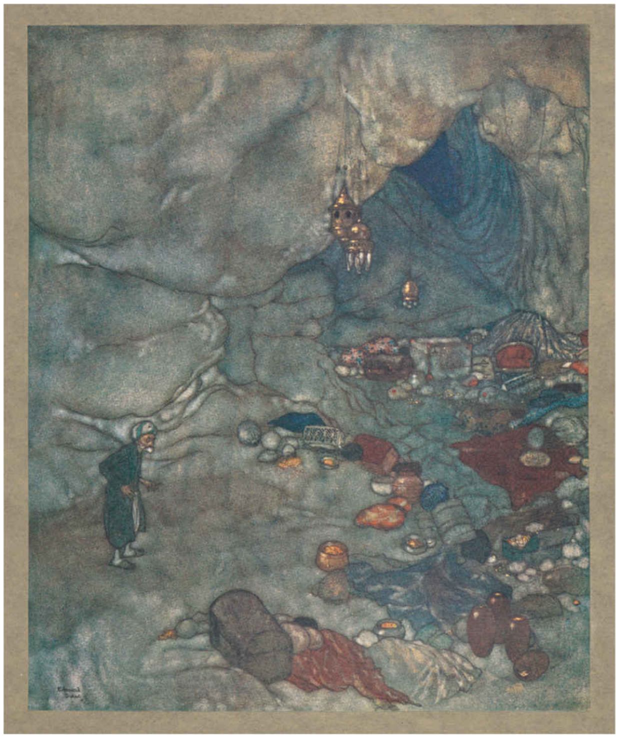
“Enough dissembling,” said his brother, showing him the gold coin. “How many more have you got?”

It was clear to Ali Baba that, through his wife’s imprudence, Qasim already knew what he had tried so hard to hide. There was nothing to do but to tell him all, without the slightest mark of sorrow or surprise. He recounted by what twist of fate he had discovered the robbers' lair and offered him a share in exchange for his secrecy.

"I expect nothing less," said Qasim proudly, "but tell me exactly where it is, and how I might enter it myself. If you refuse, I will report you to the law and you will lose it all."

Ali Baba, more out of kindness than fear of his brother's threats, told him all the secrets of the cave,[15] including the words needed to enter it and exit. Qasim left at once, hoping to arrive before Ali Baba and get the treasure for himself.

Before dawn, he set off with ten mules bearing empty chests.[16] He found the path, the rock, the tree, and by the door he said, "Open, Sesame!" It opened and shut behind him. Greedily, Qasim took in the cave, which was even more packed with treasure than Ali Baba had described. The longer he looked at each thing in turn, the wilder his excitement. He could have feasted his eyes all day on the gold, but, remembering that he had come to remove it, he hastened to fill as many bags as he could. His mind was so fixed on his new fortune that when it came time to leave, he found he had forgotten the secret word. Instead of "Sesame," he said, "Open, Barley!" and the door stayed fast. He named several other kinds of grain,[17] but it would not move.

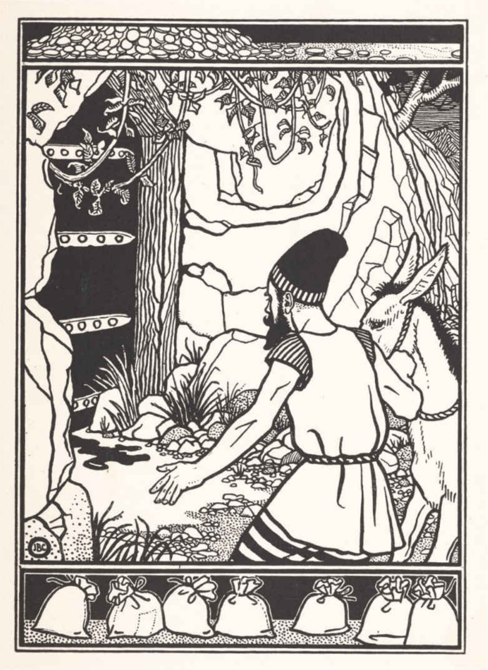


Qasim in the cave of treasure. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

Qasim panicked. The harder he strained for the right word, the farther it slipped from his mind, so that it too seemed to have been locked away where he could not reach it. He threw down his bags and paced around the cave, oblivious now to its riches.

The thieves returned around noon. When they saw the mules grazing around the rock with chests on their backs, they charged, scattering them into the forest. The men lost no time running after the mules; it mattered more to find their owner. As some hung back to search around the rock, the captain walked the others to the door, sabers in hand, and opened it with the secret words.

From inside the cave, Qasim heard the horses and knew his end was near. Still, he resolved to escape, and as the door opened, he flung himself outside and knocked the captain down. But he could not evade the other thieves, who killed him with their sabers on the spot. Inside, they found the bags Qasim had tried to remove; those Ali Baba had taken went unnoticed. They could not understand how anyone had entered, as the opening in the vault was inaccessible, and only they knew the secret to the door.



Ali Baba sees the spilled blood. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

The thieves quartered Qasim’s body and nailed it to the wall inside the cave—two quarters on each side—as a warning to others. Their work done, and resolving not to return before the corpse’s stink had faded, they closed the cave and rode off in search of caravans to loot.

As night fell, Qasim’s wife, worried that he had not returned, went to tell Ali Baba, who had avoided the forest that day so as not to disturb his brother. He tried to reassure her, guessing that Qasim had preferred to return after dark.

Qasim’s wife, who grasped the importance of secrecy, was persuaded to go home and wait patiently until midnight. By then, her unease had turned to anguish, but, being sworn to discretion, she could neither cry out nor call for help. She spent the night repenting the folly that had led her to pry into her brother-in-law’s affairs. At first light, she ran to him in tears.

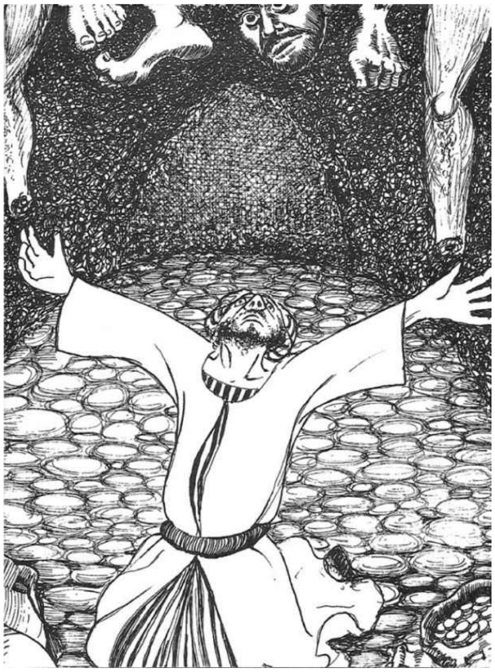
Ali Baba knew what she wanted from him, and, having advised her to temper her grief, set off at once for the forest with his mules. By the rock, seeing the spilled blood and no sign of the mules, he feared the worst. He reached the door and said the words, and as it opened he met the horrible sight of his brother’s body in quarters. At once, he forgot the bad blood between them,[18] took down and wrapped the remains, and loaded them on his mules, along with fresh sacks of gold hidden under wood. Then he closed the cave and waited for night before returning home. He drove the two mules carrying gold into the barn, told his wife what had happened to Qasim, and led the other mule to his sister-in-law’s house.

He knocked, and the door was opened by the slave Marjana,[19] whom he knew to be shrewd and inventive. After unloading the mules, he took her aside and swore her to secrecy.

“Those bags contain the body of your master,” he said. “We must bury him as though he had died a natural death. Take me to your mistress, and pay attention to what I say.”

Marjana led the way.

“Well, brother-in-law,” pleaded Qasim’s wife, “what news of my husband? I see from your face that you do not bring consolation.”



Ali Baba met the horrible sight of his brother’s body in quarters. From Brazilian illustrator Lila Figueiredo; restored image printed by permission of her estate.

“Sister-in-law,” said Ali Baba, “I cannot tell you anything before you promise to hear me out without saying a word. Then you must swear to keep this secret,[20] for your own sake.”

She swore, and, knowing her husband was dead, let out a low sob. Ali Baba told her everything.

“I know,” he added, “that this tragedy cannot be undone, but if it is any comfort, I propose to join the little wealth I have to yours by marrying you.[21] I assure you that my wife would not be jealous and that you would get on well. If you agree, we shall endeavor to pretend that Qasim died a natural death. For that, I think we can rely on Marjana.”

What better course was there for Qasim’s widow than to marry Ali Baba? Rich now after the death of her first husband, she had found another husband who was richer than she, and who, thanks to the treasure he had found, might become richer still. She dried her eyes and agreed, holding back the usual cries of women who have lost their husbands.

Marjana, meanwhile, set to work.[22] She went to the druggist’s shop and asked for a tablet that was known to help patients suffering the most extreme diseases. The druggist produced it and asked her who in her master’s house was so ill.

“Alas!” she sighed. “It is Qasim himself. My good master can no longer speak or eat, and nobody knows how to cure him.”

She paid for the medicine, though Qasim had little use for it now.

The next day, she returned and asked the druggist for an essence given only as a last resort to people on their deathbeds.

“Alas!” she said, with a great show of grief. “I fear this essence will be of no more use than the tablets.”

All day, Ali Baba and his wife had been seen going to and from Qasim’s house with ashen faces, so no one was surprised that evening to hear Qasim’s widow howl and Marjana cry that her master was dead.

Early the next morning, Marjana went to an old cobbler on the square whose custom it was to open his shop well before the others. She greeted him and slipped him a gold coin. Baba Mustafa, as he was known to all, who was a cheerful spirit and always quick to laugh, squinted at the coin in the half-light of dawn.

“First payment!” he said. “What can I do for you?”

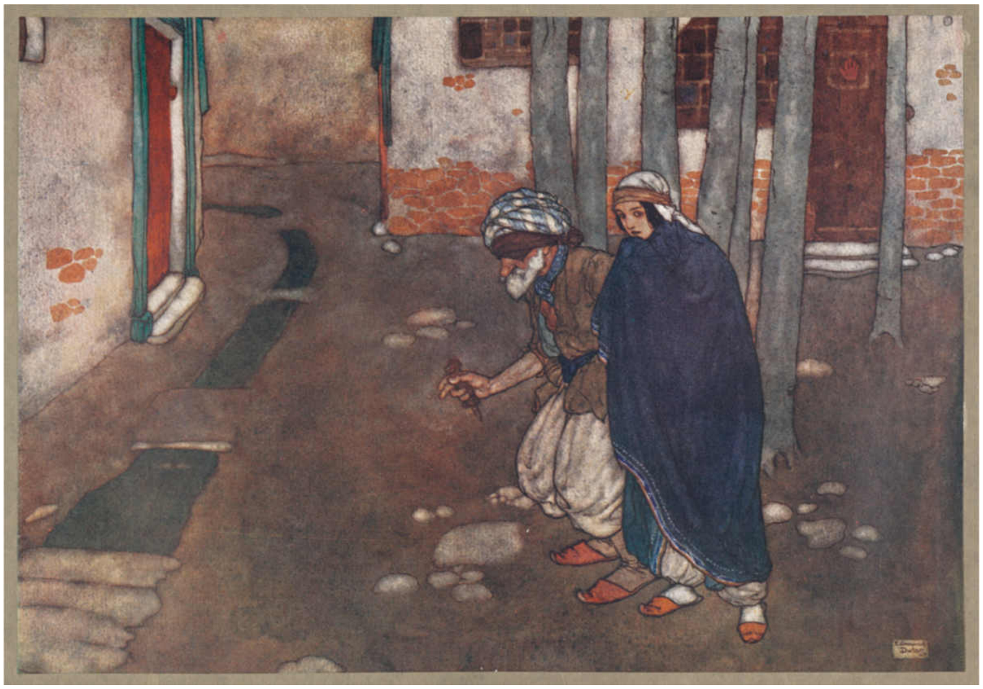
“Baba Mustafa,” said Marjana, “take your needle and thread and follow me, but on the condition that you let me blindfold you after a certain point.”

“Oh!” he said. “You want me to act against my honor and conscience?”

Marjana slipped another coin into his hand.

“God forbid,” she said, “that I should ask you to do anything you would not do honorably. Just come, and do not worry.”

Baba Mustafa let himself be led away. Marjana, having covered his eyes with a handkerchief when they had passed a certain point, walked him to her dead master’s house. When they reached the room where she had put the body, she removed his blindfold and said, “Sew these quarters together as fast as you can, and I shall give you another coin.” When he was finished, Marjana covered his eyes again, gave him a third coin, and swore him to secrecy. Then she led him back the way they had come and, after removing the handkerchief, watched him until he disappeared from view, lest he be curious to retrace his steps and spy on her.



Marjana walked the cobbler to her dead master’s house. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

Marjana had warmed some water[23] for the washing of the corpse. Ali Baba, who arrived just as she returned, washed and perfumed his brother’s body and wrapped it with the usual ceremonies. Then the carpenter brought the coffin that Ali Baba had taken care to order. To keep him from noticing what was at hand, Marjana met him at the door, paid him and sent him off and then helped Ali Baba lower the body inside.

When Ali Baba had nailed the coffin shut, Marjana went to the mosque to announce that everything was ready for the burial. The corpse washers offered their services, but she told them it had already been done. She had hardly returned home when the imam and other elders from the mosque arrived. Four neighbors carried the coffin on their shoulders and followed the imam, who recited prayers, to the cemetery. Marjana trailed them to the gravesite,[24] weeping and beating her chest. Qasim’s wife stayed at home, but her plaintive cries filled the streets. In this way, the dreadful manner of Qasim’s death remained a secret to all but his widow, Marjana, Ali Baba, and his wife.

Three or four days later, Ali Baba carried his few possessions to the house of his brother’s widow. No one was surprised by their marriage, the likes of which are not unusual in our religion. Ali Baba’s son, who had been apprenticed to another merchant, took over Qasim’s shop. His father promised him that if he kept up his good conduct, he would marry him as well as he deserved.

When the forty thieves returned to their keep in the forest, they were astonished to find Qasim’s body gone and their hoard of gold greatly diminished.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

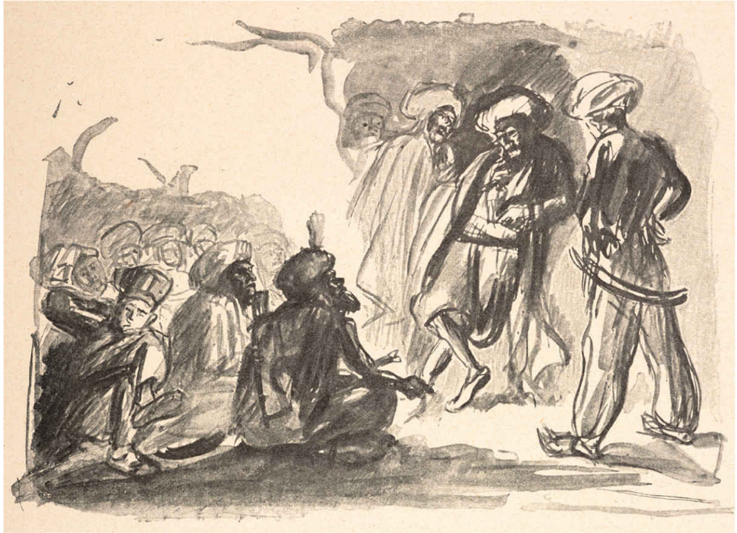
When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

“We have been discovered,” said the captain of the thieves, “and if we do not act at once, we will lose everything our ancestors and we have struggled hard to get. The man we killed was not alone in knowing our secret: The removal of his body and our gold is solid proof. And since it does not seem that more than two were in on it, now that we have killed the first, we must find and kill the other. What do you say, brave men? Are you with me?”

The thieves cheered him as one, and they resolved to abandon all else until they found the intruder.

“I expected nothing less of your courage,” said the captain. “One of you must go into the city,[25] unarmed and dressed as a traveler, and employ all his cunning to find the house of the man we murdered. If he betrays us or brings back a false report, he must lose his life.”



The thieves plot their next move. Illustration by Max Slevogt from Ali Baba und die vierzig Räuber *(1903).*

One of the thieves stepped forward.

“I will do it,” he said, “and am proud to risk my life in taking on this quest. If I fail, remember me as one who lacked neither will nor courage for the common good.”

He was praised by the others and then left in disguise, under cover of night. He timed his journey so well that he entered the city just as day was breaking, and he went to the only stall he found open on the square. Baba

Mustafa was already at work, awl in hand. The thief greeted him and, noticing his great age, said, “Old man, the sun is hardly up yet. How can you possibly see what you are doing? Even in full daylight, I doubt that your eyes are strong enough to thread a needle.”

“You must not know me,” said Baba Mustafa. “My eyes are so good that not long ago, I sewed a dead man together in a room no lighter than it is now.”

“A dead man!” said the thief, overjoyed that his first encounter had led him so swiftly to his purpose. “Do you mean to say that you sewed up his shroud?”

“I know what I mean,” replied Baba Mustafa. “You want me to talk, but I will say no more.”

The thief needed no further proof that he was on the right course. He placed a gold coin in the old man’s palm and said, “I have no wish to discover your secret, though I assure you it would have been safe with me. All I ask is that you show me the house where you stitched up the dead man.”

“Even if I wanted to,” replied Baba Mustafa, ready to return the coin, “I swear that I could not, for I was led there blindfolded, and when my work was done, I came home in the same way. You see, it is impossible for me to help you.”

“You must at least remember the path you took,” said the thief. “Come, let me cover your eyes, and we shall walk together, taking the same streets you took before.”

Baba Mustafa saw another gold coin land in his palm, and he looked at them for some time, wondering what to do. At last, he pulled out his purse and dropped the coins inside.

“I will do my best,” he said, “to remember the way.”

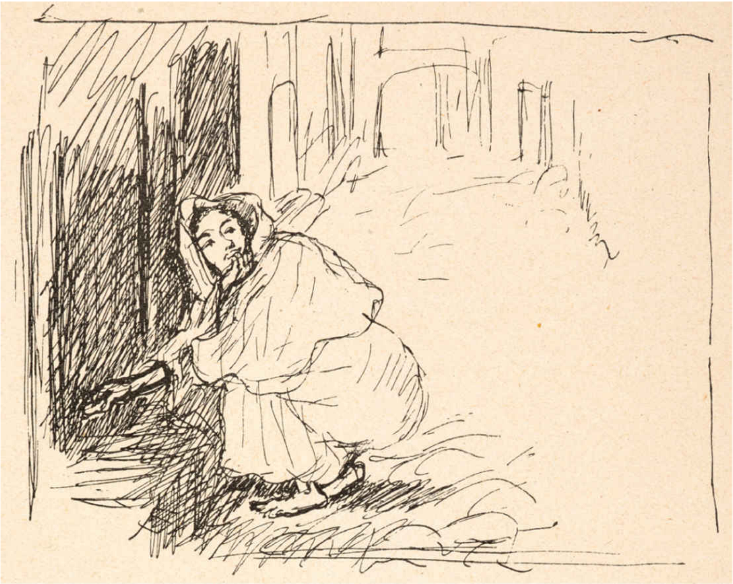
To the thief’s delight, he rose, and without closing his shop, where he had nothing of consequence to lose, led him to the place where Marjana had covered his eyes. There the thief, who had his handkerchief ready, wrapped it around the old man’s head and walked beside him, now leading and now following his lead, until he stopped.

“I do not believe we went farther than this,” he said. They had indeed come to Qasim’s house, where Ali Baba now lived. The thief chalked a white mark on the front door and, after uncovering the man’s eyes, asked to whom it belonged. But Baba Mustafa said he was not from the neighborhood and could not tell him. So the thief let him go, thanked him for his trouble, and returned to the forest.

Not long after, Marjana came home from an errand and noticed the mark the thief had made on the door.

"What is the meaning of this mark?" she wondered. "Is someone out to harm my master, or is it just a game? Whatever the reason, it is better to be safe."

She took a piece of white chalk,[26] and, as the houses on each side were similar, she marked their doors in the same way, without telling anyone what she had done.



Marjana marked the doors with white chalk. Illustration by Max Slevogt from Ali Baba und die vierzig Räuber *(1903).*

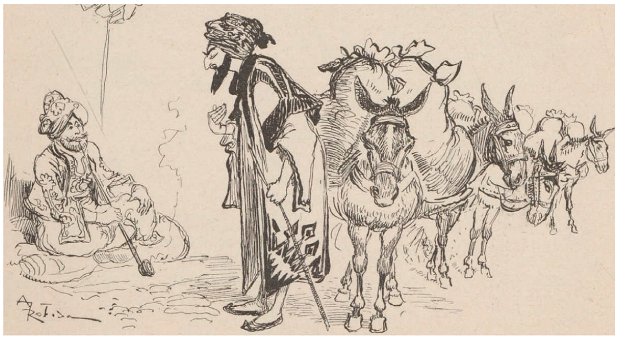
The thief, meanwhile, told his friends of his success, overstating his good fortune to have found on his arrival the only man able to tell him what he had traveled there to find. The captain joined his praise to the others' and said, "Comrades, we must make haste. Let us go into the city discreetly, weapons concealed. Wait for me in little groups in the main square while I go inspect the house with our informant."

They entered the city in twos and threes, so as not to attract attention, but when it came to identifying the door, the captain found that the surrounding houses were marked in the same manner. The informant was too confounded to think of an explanation, and when they returned to the forest, he was put to death for his failure.

Another thief came forward and, having bribed Baba Mustafa and found the house, marked it with red chalk in a less obvious place. But his ruse did not escape Marjana's sharp eyes,[27] nor did she fail to mark the surrounding doors in the same way, so that once again the captain and his men were forced to return defeated and kill another one of their own.

Wary of losing any more men, the captain resolved to go himself. With the cobbler's help, he found the house, but rather than play around with chalk, he simply examined it so carefully that he would not mistake it. He returned to the cave and sent his men into the villages to buy nineteen mules and thirty-eight leather jars—one full of oil, the others empty. Loosening the necks of the jars, he had each thief crawl into a jar fully armed,[28] and he rubbed the outside of each vessel with oil. When it was dark, and the mules were loaded with the jars (thirty-seven containing thieves, one containing oil), the captain led them into town. He went straight to Ali Baba's house and found him outside, taking the air after dinner.

"I have come from far away," he said, "to carry this oil to market tomorrow. It is late, and I have nowhere to sleep, unless you would do me the favor of taking me in for the night."



The captain found Ali Baba outside his house. Illustration by Albert Robida, from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909). Robida's skills as a caricaturist are evident in his illustrations for this early twentieth-century French edition of the* Nights.

Though Ali Baba had seen this man in the forest, and even heard his voice, he did not recognize him in his merchant's guise, and he welcomed him in.[29] He told a servant to bring hay for the mules, and he asked Marjana to prepare supper and a bed for his guest. The thief made a show of settling down outdoors, but Ali Baba insisted he enter, and spent the evening entertaining the man who had designs on his life. After dinner, Ali Baba said, “You are the master here, and have only to ask for whatever you may need. There is nothing in my house that is not here to serve you.”

Then, as Ali Baba went to the kitchen to speak with Marjana, the thief stepped out into the courtyard on the pretext of checking on his mules.

After reminding Marjana to take good care of their guest, Ali Baba added that, in the morning, he would go to the bath before dawn.[30] “Make sure my bath linen is ready,” he said, “and give it to Abdullah (that was the name of his servant). And make me some good broth to have on my return.”

Meanwhile, the captain crept across the yard, ready to give the order to his men. Approaching each vessel in turn, he said, “As soon as you hear me throw stones from my window, cut open your jars with your knives and come out. I will be with you at once.”

Then he returned to the kitchen and Marjana led him to his room, where he lay down fully clothed and turned out the light, ready to rise again after his first sleep.

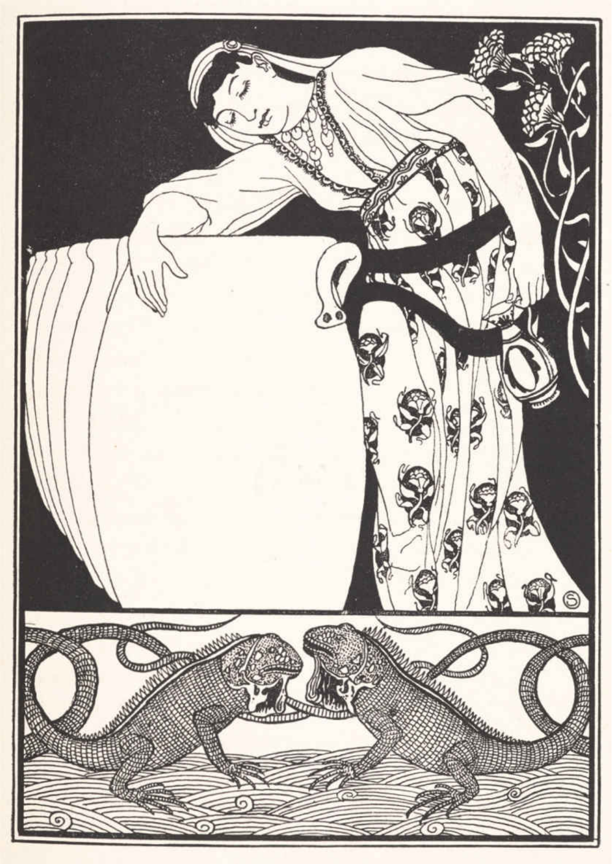
Marjana did not forget Ali Baba’s orders. She prepared his bath linen, gave them to Abdullah, who had not yet gone to bed, and set a pot on the fire to make broth. As she skimmed off the fat, the lamp went out, but they had no more oil in the house. Abdullah had an idea: “Why don’t you take some oil from one of the jars in the yard?” She thanked him for his advice, and as he went to sleep near Ali Baba’s room, in order to follow him to the bath, she took a jug and stepped out.

As she approached the first jar, she heard a voice whisper, “Is it time?” Although the thief spoke low, Marjana heard him clearly, since the captain, after unloading his mules, had loosened the necks of all the jars to give his men more air.

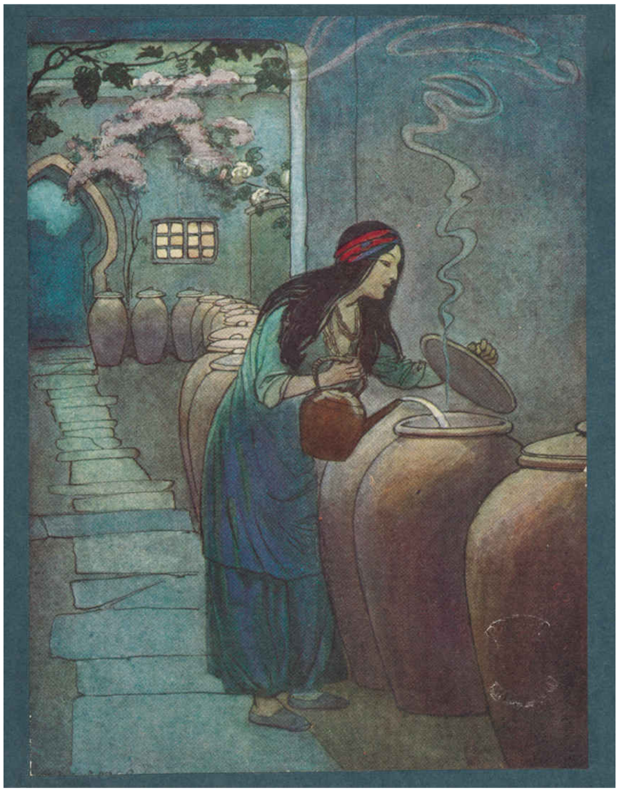
Any other servant but Marjana, on finding a man in a jar instead of oil, would have made a noisy disturbance. But she was wiser than the rest. She understood at once the danger her master was in, and the need to counter it quietly.

“Not yet, but soon,” she whispered back, aping the captain’s voice. She walked up to the next jar, and to the same question she gave the same answer, until she reached the last one, which was silent.

It was clear to Marjana that her master Ali Baba had opened his home not to an oil merchant but to thirty-seven thieves and their captain. She filled her jug with oil from the last jar and returned to the kitchen, where she rekindled the lamp. Now she took a large cauldron, went back to the yard to fill it with oil, and placed it on the fire. When it boiled, she carried it out and poured the oil into each jar in turn,[31] killing the men inside.



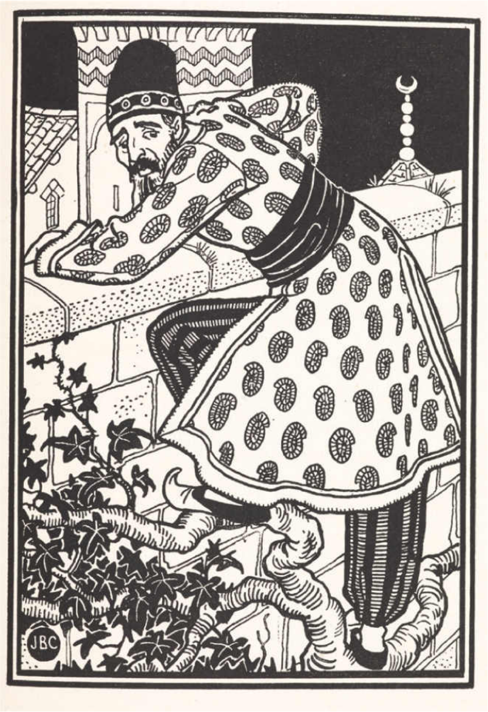
Marjana hears a whisper from the first jar. Illustration by William Strang from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*



“She poured the oil into each jar in turn.” Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

Back in the kitchen, Marjana closed the door and put out the large fire she had lighted, leaving only enough heat to finish cooking the broth. Then she turned out the lamp and sat waiting in silence. Not a quarter hour later, the captain awoke, and, sensing only darkness and a great stillness in the house, gave the signal. Some of his stones hit the jars, but nothing stirred inside them. He tried throwing more stones, worried now, but none of his men gave a sign of life.

As softly as he could, he stole into the courtyard, but he was met by the smell of hot oil and burning flesh near the first vase, and he knew that his plot to kill Ali Baba had failed. He found all his men dead, and, seeing the oil gone from the last jar, he understood how they had died. In fear for his life, he forced the door into the garden, and, by leaping from one garden to the next, he escaped. When Marjana was sure that he would not return, she rejoiced at her success and went to sleep.



The captain leapt from one garden to the next and escaped. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

Ali Baba, meanwhile, left before dawn to go to the bath with his servant, knowing nothing of the strange incident that had occurred in his house while he slept. Marjana had decided not to wake him, since she had had no time to lose while danger was at hand, and once she had averted it, there was no need to disturb her master's peace.

On Ali Baba's return from the bath, the sun was up, and he could see that the jars of oil were still in his courtyard. Marjana, who met him at the door, had left everything as it was in order to explain what she had done to save him. He asked her why the merchant had not taken his mules to market.

"My good master," she said, "God protect you and your household! You will understand better when you see what I have to show you."

She led him to the first jar and told him to look inside. Ali Baba looked, saw a man, and leapt back in fright.

"Have no fear," said Marjana. "This man cannot harm you, though he meant to. He is dead."

"Marjana," cried Ali Baba, "what does this mean? Explain!"

“I will,” she said, “but temper your surprise,[32] or the neighbors will find out what must be kept a secret. First look inside the other jars.”

One by one, he looked into the others and noticed that the last jar was missing some of its oil. Then he stood there, stunned, now looking at the jars, now at Marjana, unable to say a word. At last he said, “And the merchant, what became of him?”

“He is no more a merchant than I am,” said Marjana, and after giving her master his broth, she told him the whole story. “I am convinced,” she added, “that these thieves are also to blame for the chalk marks I saw on our door the other day. Until the last one is dead, you must remain on your guard, as I will.”

“I owe you my life,” said Ali Baba, “a debt I shall carry to my grave. In token of my gratitude, I give you your freedom.[33] Now we must bury the bodies, so that no one will suspect their fate.”

Ali Baba’s garden was long and bordered by large trees. Under one tree, he and Abdullah dug a ditch, long and wide enough for the corpses, and, having removed their weapons, they arranged the thieves in the pit. Then they covered it with earth so that the ground appeared no different than before. Ali Baba hid the jars and weapons and sent the mules to market to be sold.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The captain of the thieves returned to the forest in despair. “Where are you now, brave comrades?”[34] he cried into the empty cave. “What will I do without you?” He resolved to avenge them by killing Ali Baba. The next morning, he dressed carefully and went into town, where he took lodgings in a khan. He found that the innkeeper knew nothing of the events of the previous day, by which he judged that Ali Baba wished to conceal the secrets of the cave, which only doubled his resolve to destroy him. Making several trips back and forth to the cave, he brought a great deal of fine cloth to the city, and when he had enough to sell as merchandise, he rented a shop and filled it with his goods.[35] The shop opposite his happened to be Qasim's, and it was now occupied by Ali Baba's son.

Under the name of Khawaja Hussein, the thief made the acquaintance of his neighbors, and as Ali Baba's son was younger, more spirited, and more sociable than the other merchants, they soon became friends. When the captain learned who the shopkeeper's father was, he redoubled his efforts, regaling him with presents and inviting him to share his meals. Ali Baba's son, whose cramped room prevented him from repaying his friend's kindnesses, asked his father to host. Ali Baba agreed with pleasure.

"As tomorrow is Friday[36] and your shop will be closed," he said, "why don't you take a walk together in the afternoon and bring him here on your way back. I shall tell Marjana to have supper ready."

Returning from their walk the next day, Ali Baba's son led his friend to his father's house and invited him inside. Ali Baba welcomed them warmly, and thanked Khawaja Hussein for the kindness he had shown his son. The merchant returned the compliment, and, after they had talked a while longer, he turned to leave.

"Where are you going, sir?" said Ali Baba, "Please, do me the honor of dining with us."

"Good sir," said the thief, "I fear I am unable to take up your kind offer."

Ali Baba asked him for the reason.

"It is," the thief replied, "that I can eat no food containing salt."[37]

"If that is the only reason," said Ali Baba, "it must not stop you from staying. First, there is no salt in the bread we eat. As for the meat and stews, I shall ask for them to be made without salt."

He went to the kitchen and asked Marjana to leave the meat unsalted, and to prepare two more dishes without salt.

Marjana, who was about to serve the meal, could not help but show her displeasure.

"Who is this difficult man who eats no salt? Your food will be spoiled if I do not serve it now."

"He is an honest man, Marjana," said Ali Baba. "Do as I ask."

She obeyed, halfhearted. Still she wondered who this strange man was, and as she helped Abdullah carry out the dishes, she stole a glimpse at the guest. At once she recognized him[38] as the captain of the thieves, and, as she looked closer, she saw that he held a dagger beneath his merchant's cloak.

"I am not surprised," she thought, "that this rogue who wants to kill my master refuses to eat salt with him. But I shall foil his plans."

As they ate, Marjana made preparations for her daring plan. Then she served the fruit and the wine and left Ali Baba alone with his son and his guest. The thief thought his moment had come: He would get them drunk, murder the father, and escape through the garden as he had done before. But Marjana did not allow him time to carry out his wicked deed. She dressed up as a dancer[39] and clasped a silver girdle around her waist, on which she hung a silver dagger. She completed her outfit with a headdress and a mask, and to Abdullah she said, "Come, take your tambourine and let us entertain our guest."

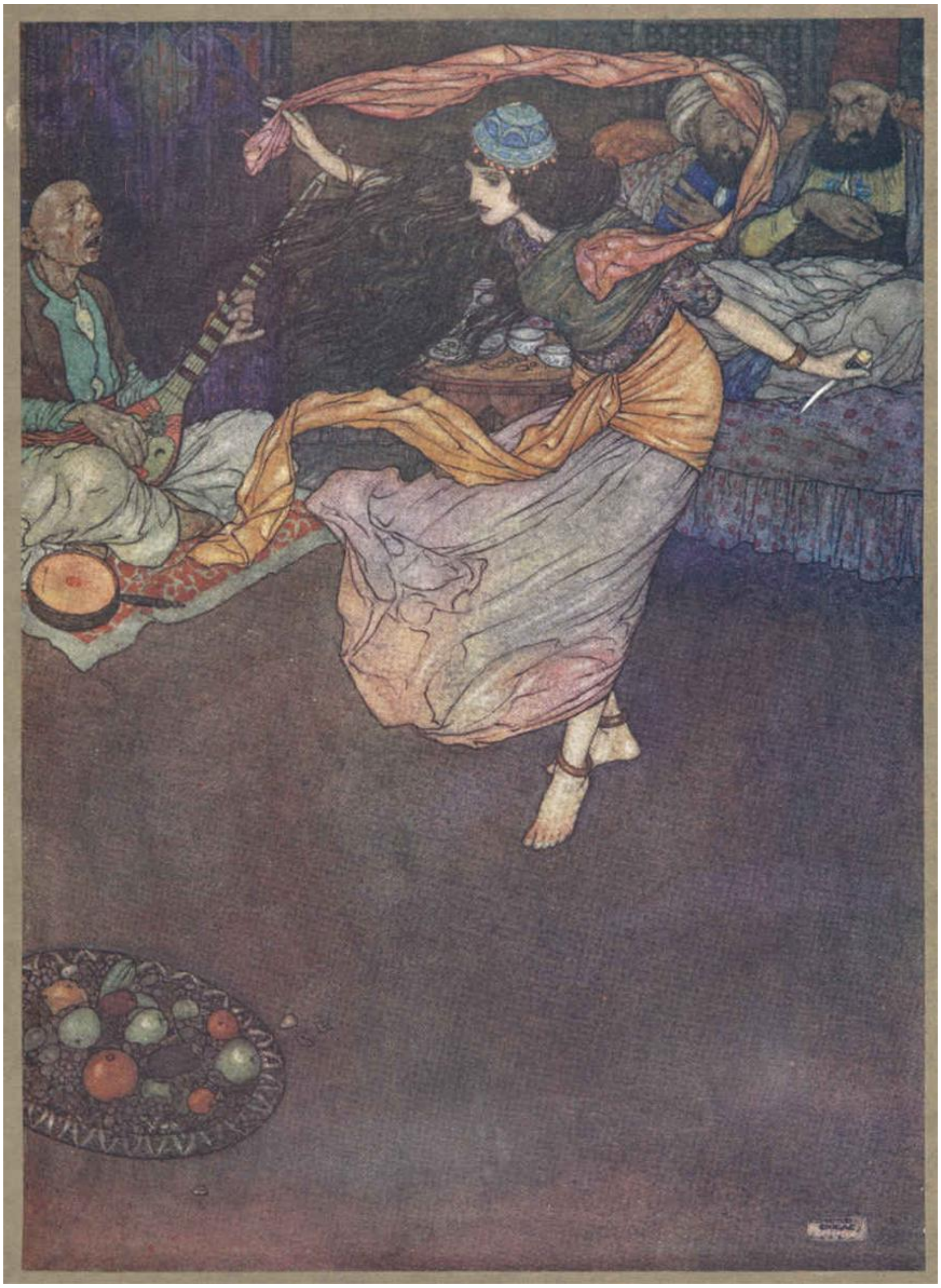
Abdullah took his drum and beat it as they entered the room. Marjana walked in after him and took a deep bow.

"Come in, Marjana," said Ali Baba, "and show our guest what you can do."

Turning to his guest, he added, "Do not think that it is costing me to offer you this entertainment. I have it at home thanks to my servant and my cook. I hope that you will not find it unpleasant."

Khawaja Hussein feared that this interlude would deprive him of the chance to strike. Still, he feigned amusement. Marjana, who could rival the greatest artists, performed a delightful variety of dances. In her final dance, she drew the dagger and struck poses with it, now holding it high, now pointing it to her breast, now thrusting it into the air. At last, out of breath, she took the drum from Abdullah with her left hand and, clasping the dagger in her right, held out the instrument to her audience for tips. Ali Baba threw a coin into the drum; his son followed his example. Khawaja

Hussein was reaching into his purse to do the same when Marjana, with a daring worthy of her spirit, plunged her dagger into his heart.



Marjana dances. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights, *retold by Laurence Housman (1907).*

“What have you done!” cried Ali Baba. “Do you mean to ruin us?”

“It was not to ruin you, master, but to save you,” said Marjana, opening the dead man’s cloak and revealing the dagger in his hand. “Look at the face of your enemy! It is the face of the false oil merchant and the captain of the forty thieves. I smelled trouble as soon as you said he would not eat salt with you. You see that I was not wrong to suspect him.”

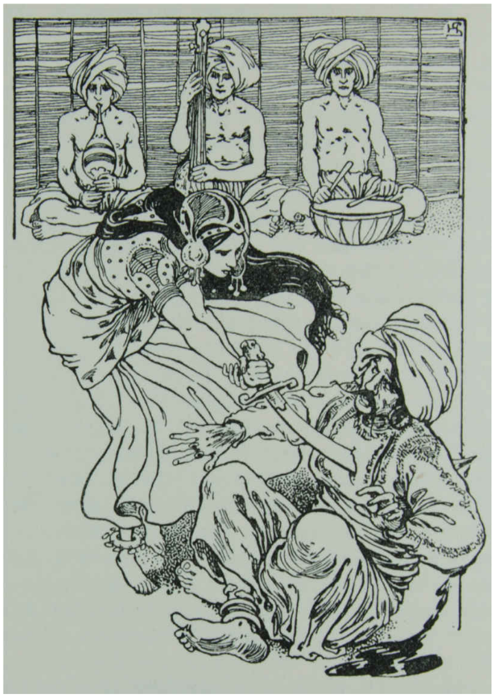
Ali Baba was so grateful to Marjana for saving his life a second time that he offered her his son in marriage. And to his son he said, “You are a good enough son not to think it strange that I am giving you Marjana for a wife. You owe her your life no less than I do, for there is no doubt that Khawaja Hussein, having betrayed and killed me, would have sacrificed you to his vengeance in turn. Consider also that, by marrying Marjana, you will marry the pillar of my family,[40] who will be your support for as long as you live.”

The son, far from being displeased, agreed, as much out of duty as his own desire.

Then they buried the captain near the bodies of the thirty-seven thieves, so quietly that nobody found out until many years after, when no one cared about the story any longer.

Some days later, Ali Baba celebrated the union of Marjana and his son with the greatest ceremony. None of his guests, who were his friends and neighbors, suspected any other reason for the marriage than Marjana’s qualities, and they praised him for his good heart.

Ali Baba, who had seen thirty-eight thieves die, still did not dare return to the cave, as he supposed the remaining two were still alive. But at the end of a year, curiosity led him back. He said, “Open, Sesame!” and the door opened for him, and the state of the cave led him to judge that no one had been in there since Khawaja Hussein had set up shop in the city, and therefore that the forty thieves had been undone. He now had no doubt that he alone knew the secrets of the cave, and that the treasure within it was his.[41] After filling his bags with as much gold as his horse could bear, he returned home. He told the secret to his son, who in turn passed it on to his, and, by using their fortune wisely, they and their descendants lived in splendor and were held in great esteem for all their lives.



Marjana plunged her dagger into his heart. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912). British illustrators Helen Stratton and Dora Curtis were among the first women whose illustrations were credited in English editions of the* Nights *(although many women had participated in William Harvey's workshop for E. W. Lane's translation of 1838–40). They would be followed in the next decade by American illustrators Frances Brundage (1924) and Virginia Sterrett (1928).*

◆

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

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1. *The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves:* The original title for this story in Galland's diary was "Marjana's Perspicacity, or The Forty Robbers Extinguished through the Skillfulness of a Slave." Ali Baba's name in Diyab's story was "Hogia Baba." See Diyab's original version in Part III.

2. *but chance dealt them different fates:* The initial circumstances of the two brothers are attributed to fate, but the story that follows offers them both a chance to prove the quality of their characters.

3. *became one of the wealthiest merchants in the city:* Both Qasim and Ali Baba are sons of a merchant, albeit a relatively unsuccessful one, and the story is infused with the values of merchants in a way that mirrors the original tales of *The Thousand and One Nights.*

4. *the riders might be thieves:* This story has been identified as a tale of forty "thieves," but these characters should be more accurately identified as "robbers" or "bandits" who operate beyond the security of the city by stealing from travelers and caravans. These kinds of robbers are portrayed in an extremely negative way in the *1001 Nights* and should be distinguished from the kinds of clever thieves in other *Nights* tales such as "Dalila the Crafty." Even stories that feature corruption and criminality still condemn this category of robber. In the "Baybars and the Sixteen Captains of Police" story cycle, "The Tale of the Fifteenth Captain" celebrates the punishment of a robber who has killed a young traveler, and in "The Tale of the Sixteenth Captain," a man begs the sheikh of pilgrims to save him from a robber, and a crocodile appears and devours the bandit (Gerhardt, pp. 175–77).

5. *"Open, Sesame!":* Ali Baba learns the secret of the cave by luck, but in the oral tale documented in Syria, a talking tree speaks to the woodcutter and teaches him the secret formula (Chraïbi, p. 9). The reference to the sesame plant in this magic formula may be a legacy of Babylonian incantations that refer to its magical ability to undo spells (Irwin, "Afterword").

6. *"Open, Sesame!":* The Grimm brothers included a version of the story of Ali Baba in their collection of German folktales. In "Simeli Mountain," recorded in May 1814, the password was transformed to "Mount Semsi, Mount Semsi, open up." In 1855, Charles Dickens, greatly devoted to the *Arabian Nights*, put this Ali Baba staple to satirical use in "The Thousand and One Humbugs," to attack the privileges of the British aristocracy. While the robbers in Galland's story gain access to their riches by saying, "Open, Sesame," British aristocrats simply reference their ancestral pedigree by saying, "Debrett's *Peerage*," and they are granted immense wealth. Dickens extends this satire by suggesting that, in "the dominions of the Sultan of the Indies, all true believers kiss the ground seven hundred and seventy-seven times on hearing the magic words, 'Debrett's *Peerage*.'"

7. *He saw piles of food:* A comparison between Galland's notes from Diyab's storytelling and the published French story show that the translator has eliminated the description of a table set with large numbers of sumptuous dishes. In so doing, he blurs the implied appetite test that Diyab has taken from his source material—a mechanism meant to reveal the moral quality of the characters. A clearer version of the tale type from which Diyab was drawing occurs in a Syrian story recorded by folklore researchers. In the story of "The Woodcutter and the Jinn," the cave is inhabited by jinn. When the woodcutter brings his rich brother into the cave, he takes more than he should, and the jinn set a trap for him by leaving out some tantalizing meat. When the brother eats the meat, he forgets the password. A Kabyle (Berber) version of the tale also uses an appetite test, but the temptation is seven large dishes of couscous, which distract the rich brother and allow him to be caught by the ogres who live in the cave. In a West African version of the tale from the Yoruba people, food is the only treasure and must be consumed moderately if access to the source is to be preserved (Chraïbi, pp. 9–10).

8. *collected as much gold:* In the appetite test, the character is supposed to prove that he can control his cravings. Those with the ability to consume food—or, in this case, treasure—in moderation are deemed worthy of reward, and the greedy will face destruction.

9. *“I am no thief”:* The ethical aspects of this story are quite ambiguous, given that both Ali Baba and the robbers occupy marginal positions because of their thievery. The materials from which the story is constructed do not fit easily within a conventional moral code, and Galland seems to be making an effort to defend the worth of his protagonist against any suggestion that he, too, is a criminal.

10. *“keep the secret”:* The secret nature of the treasure is key to its appeal, as Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka recalls in his memoir *Aké: The Years of Childhood*. Soyinka associates “Ali Baba” and “Aladdin” with biblical stories and a realm of magic that may be entered through the consumption of the forbidden fruit of childhood. The pomegranate “with its stone-hearted look and feel unlocked the cellars of Ali Baba, extracted the genie from Aladdin’s lamp, plucked the strings of the harp that restored David to sanity, parted the waters of the Nile and filled our parsonage with incense from the dim temple of Jerusalem.”

11. *She went to fetch one:* Each detail here is clearly motivated and will play a role in the plot. In this case, Ali Baba’s wife must borrow a scale to weigh the gold, since she is too poor to have one, and this immediately arouses the curiosity of Qasim’s wife (Gerhardt, pp. 180–81). Her scheme will yield the information that will move the plot forward.

12. *Envy gripped her heart:* Envy is often the downfall of characters in the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The tale of “The Envied and the Envier” and “The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner,” in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” are two good examples of this phenomenon.

13. *a coin so ancient:* This detail may have been added by Antoine Galland, given his expertise in numismatics.

14. *he no longer called him by that name:* Diyab’s tale merges the basic structure of the appetite test with the broken dynamics of a merchant family, so that Qasim’s arrogance and jealousy can be contrasted with Ali Baba’s modesty and kindness. This contrast was highlighted in early English pantomimes based on Ali Baba. In *The Forty Thieves* (1806), Ali Baba has bankrupted himself through his own generosity and is despised and shunned by the wealthy Cassim (Orr, pp. 127–28).

15. *told him all the secrets of the cave:* The link between the two parts of the story—the discovery of the cave by Ali Baba and Qasim and the contest to outwit the band of robbers—rests on the importance of keeping secrets. This is the element of the story that inspired Marcel Proust’s reference to this tale in *Remembrance of Things Past*, where he likens Charles Swann, with his outward respectability and secret passions, to “Ali Baba, who as soon as he finds himself alone and unobserved, will make his way into the cave, resplendent with its unsuspected treasures.”

16. *ten mules bearing empty chests:* Even before he arrives at the cave, Qasim’s greed is on display.

17. *He named several other kinds of grain:* Qasim’s failure of the appetite test is symbolized by his groping for the right kind of grain to activate the magic of the cave. The use of an appetite test in a story that otherwise follows the pattern of a clever thief tale provides Diyab with a way to moralize his protagonist’s behavior. In the story of “Pharaoh Rhampsinitus and the Clever Thief,” related by Herodotus in his *Histories*, the thief decapitates his brother after he is caught in the treasure chamber, and he takes his head with him so he cannot be identified. In Diyab’s story, Ali Baba cannot be blamed in any way for Qasim’s death.

18. *At once he forgot the bad blood between them:* The worthiness of Ali Baba is reinforced by his reaction to his brother’s death, as he remembers his filial obligations even in a moment of horror.

19. *opened by the servant Marjana:* As in *Nights* tales like “‘Ali Shar and Zumurrud” (or “Zumurrud and ‘Ali Shar”), the slave girl is the true heroine of this story. Throughout the tale, the storyteller emphasizes Marjana’s intelligence and ingenuity, although she is often remembered in popular culture only for her dance for the captain of the robbers—a moment frequently sexualized by illustrators and filmmakers. Some adaptations of the *Nights* treat Marjana as a surrogate for Shahrazad. In a new version of *One Thousand and One Nights*, commissioned from New Delhi’s Katkatha Puppet Arts (premiering in 2021), the two characters are portrayed with the same life-size wooden puppet.”

20. *you must swear to keep this secret:* The future of Ali Baba, and the other members of his household, now depends on concealing their reliance on the loot obtained by the reviled robbers. Both Marjana and Qasim’s wife are sworn to secrecy. They must deliver the kind of deceitful performance characteristic of the tales of rogues and tricksters in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Aboubakr Chraïbi argues that the ethics in “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” are undecided, since neither Ali Baba nor the robbers are in a morally acceptable position (p. 13).

21. *“I propose to join the little wealth I have to yours”:* Ali Baba’s offer to marry Qasim’s wife seems to be a way to tie the two halves of the story together. The two households are merged and Marjana can act on behalf of Ali Baba to counter the attacks of the robbers in the second part of the tale.

22. *Marjana, meanwhile, set to work:* Like the clever thieves in the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, Marjana implements an elaborate plan by carrying out a series of deceptions on the local shopkeepers and tradespeople. Although her goal is to protect the proceeds of theft, rather than to commit a crime, her clever strategies link her to such characters as Dalila the Crafty and her daughter, Zaynab the Sly.

23. *Marjana had warmed some water:* The bathing of the body is an essential part of preparing for a burial in Islam. In this case, the mending of the corpse was necessary to permit Ali Baba to properly perform his duty of washing and wrapping his brother’s body in a shroud before burial.

24. *Marjana trailed them to the gravesite:* It is Marjana, rather than Qasim’s widow, who stages this performance to deflect any suspicions about the sudden wealth acquired by Ali Baba’s household after his brother’s death.

25. *“One of you must go into the city”:* In these scenes, the robbers present the appearance of an organized gang with a clear power hierarchy.

26. *She took a piece of white chalk:* Ali Baba is saved by the observant Marjana. This trick is used in one of the *Nights* stories added from the Wortley Montagu manuscript by Richard Burton. In “The Night-Adventure of Sultan Muhammad of Cairo,” the sultan and his vizier discover the house of a mysterious woman and her three beautiful daughters during one of their walks through the city in disguise. They mark the door when they leave, but the youngest daughter marks all the doors on the street to confuse them when they try to return. Hans Christian Andersen, who knew the *Arabian Nights* well, used the device of marking doors with chalk in his 1835 story “The Tinder Box” (published in English in 1846).

27. *But his ruse did not escape Marjana’s sharp eyes:* The duel between the thieves and the clever Marjana in this story may be connected to the ongoing battles of wits between men and women that some critics see as characteristic of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

28. *he had each thief crawl into a jar fully armed:* This strategy has a long history. It appears in an Egyptian story from the thirteenth century BCE about a general conquering the city of Jaffa by offering the townspeople two hundred earthenware pots in which soldiers were hidden (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, p. 91). The most famous version, of course, is the use of the Trojan horse.

29. *welcomed him in:* Hospitality is an important obligation in Islam. The Prophet urged Muslims to respect their guests—even strangers such as this one—and Ali Baba demonstrates his virtue in this moment.

30. *he would go to the bath before dawn:* The details that follow are carefully chosen to ensure that crucial elements of the plot are embedded in a realistic chain of cause and effect. If Ali Baba plans to go to the bath early the next morning, then Marjana will need to cook broth the evening before, and while she is cooking broth, she will need to find oil for the lamp that goes out. These are simple details, but Gerhardt admires them as evidence of the storyteller’s economy and precision.

31. *poured the oil into each jar in turn:* Marjana’s execution of the thieves on her own initiative is presented as a straightforward act through which the men who sought to infiltrate and destroy the household are outwitted and punished. Their deaths in this context can be justified, and they do little to damage the moral stature of the story’s heroine. William Makepeace Thackeray suggested that part of the beauty of the *Arabian Nights* was that “there are no uncomfortable sensations of terror,” and he was convinced that, as Marjana kills the forty robbers, she “does not seem to hurt them in the least” (Thackeray, *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, 1846). Other versions of this tale that circulated orally mention different methods for the destruction of the villains. In the Kabyle story, the ogres who come to the protagonist’s home for a meal are burned to death when he sets fire to the straw. In the Syrian version of “The Woodcutter and the Jinn,” the widow of the rich brother foils the jinn who have hidden inside trunks (Chraïbi, p. 9).

32. *“temper your surprise”:* The importance of secrecy is once again emphasized, this time by Marjana, who must insist that her master exercise the same kind of levelheaded control that she has demonstrated throughout the story.

33. *“I give you your freedom”:* Giving a slave their freedom was considered a meritorious act in Islam. Once freed, Marjana remains a valued member of Ali Baba’s household.

34. *“Where are you now, brave comrades?”:* The thieves are not just professional associates. They lived together as a family unit in the cave and enjoyed the communal meals that were emphasized in Diyab’s original telling of this tale.

35. *he rented a shop and filled it with his goods:* A story that begins in a remote location marked by an element of the supernatural mutates into a story rooted in the realistic patterns of urban economic activity. The melding of these elements must be credited to Diyab, who was raised in the trading city of Aleppo and understood the values of its merchants. When the story of Ali Baba was turned into a pantomime for the English stage in 1806, these ordinary settings and motivations had to be supplemented with an evil magician (accompanied by minions representing the forces of Famine, Fraud, War, and Rapine) and a good female fairy who could defeat him. Despite these elements of fantasy, this theatrical interpretation managed to highlight concerns about the social impact of early industrialization (Orr, p. 128).

36. *“As tomorrow is Friday”:* Friday, of course, is a holy day of worship in Islam.

37. *“I can eat no food containing salt”:* Someone who accepts salt is accepting the hospitality of the host and is under an obligation to do no harm to him.

38. *At once she recognized him:* Once again, Marjana shows that her instincts are sharper than those of her master. It is up to her to counter this last brazen deception by the captain of the robbers.

39. *She dressed up as a dancer:* There is little to suggest that Marjana has assumed a particularly seductive disguise here, but illustrators and filmmakers have interpreted this scene through eroticized images of the Middle East. In the original, the emphasis is on the dagger, which reveals her plan from the beginning. The image of Marjana as a dancer was a mainstay in film versions, which typically reduced this character to a classic damsel in distress, as in Ray Harryhausen’s *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1973) and the Bollywood-produced *Alibaba Aur 40 Chor* (1980), where a disco dance floor magically appears in a cave.

40. *“you will marry the pillar of my family”:* A marriage is often used as an ending for a story in the *Nights*, but there is an unusual emphasis on the particular value of the wife in this match. It is not her beauty or her wealth that makes her a desirable match for Ali Baba’s son, but rather the intelligence and resourcefulness of Marjana. Although this story is usually remembered for Ali Baba’s social ascension through the luck of finding the hidden treasure, it is Marjana’s accomplishments that are the true centerpiece of the tale that Diyab told Galland.

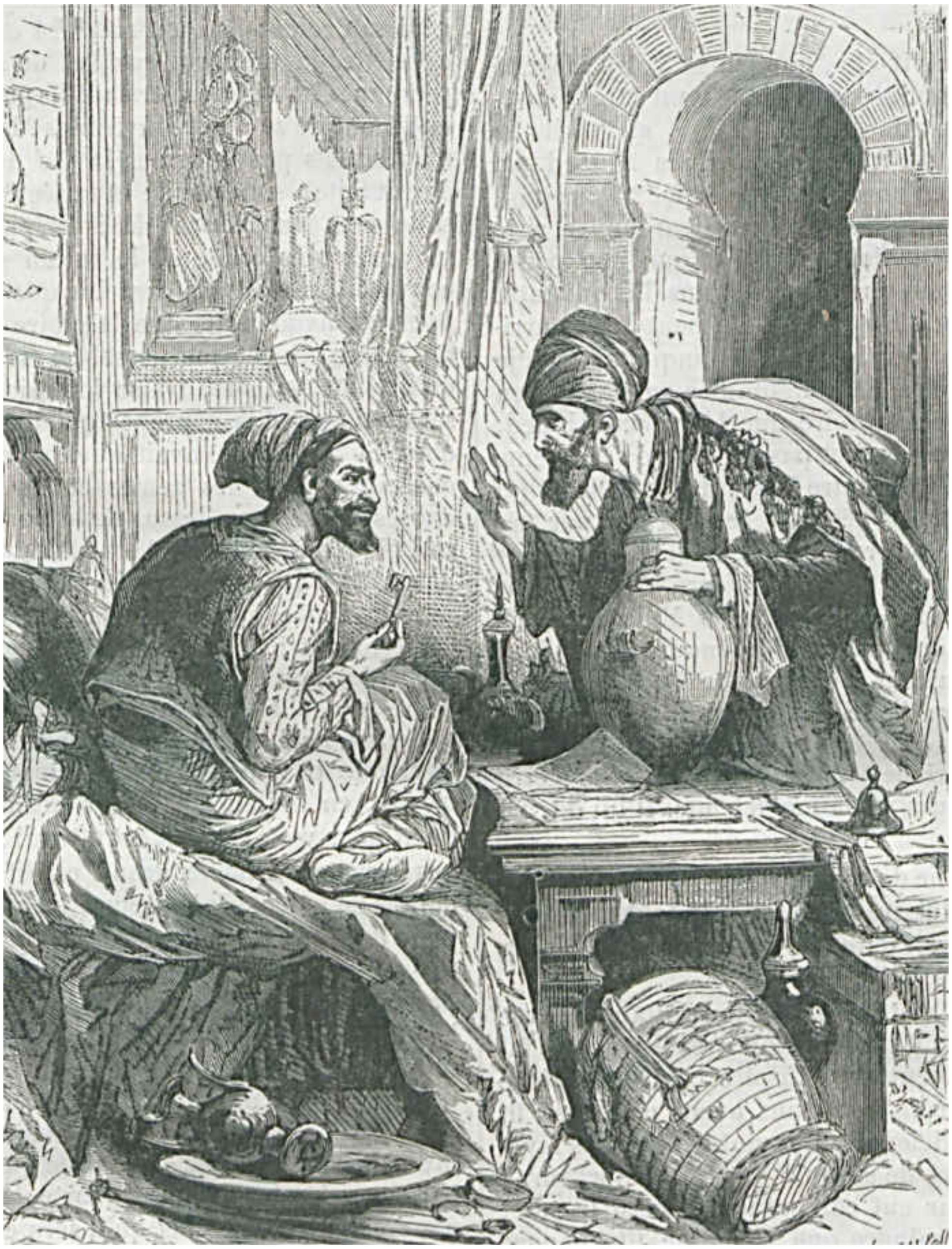
41. *the treasure within it was his:* The French version of the tale redirects the reader’s focus to Ali Baba’s wealth and goes to some pains to show that it justly belongs to him. Galland seems to have responded to the tendency of fairy tales to include a moral for the edification of their readers.

ALI KHAWAJA, MERCHANT OF BAGHDAD[1]

The story of Ali Khawaja features a prototype of the modern detective in the form of a young boy, and it unfolds according to the logic of a modern procedural. Inserted into the Arabian Nights *by Galland from a story narrated to him by Hanna Diyab, the tale draws on an old story pattern in medieval Arabic literature in which someone entrusted with valuables has to be tricked into returning them to their rightful owner. In this case, it is a young boy and his neighborhood friends who demonstrate the careful consideration of physical evidence and the precise process of reasoning that will ultimately lead to the conviction of the thief. If Jaafar in "The Story of the Three Apples" shows himself to be the worst of criminal investigators (and is only saved by blind luck), the boy in "Ali Khawaja" supplies what Mia Gerhardt considers "the most spectacular piece of detection" in the* Arabian Nights *(p. 171).*

The tale of Ali Khawaja, Merchant of Baghdad is grounded in the everyday realities of a community of merchants, who must find strategies to guard their wealth outside the security provided by modern financial institutions. This is a society where long periods of travel are expected (for either trade or pilgrimage), where one's reputation in the eyes of the community is essential to one's prosperity, and where information flows through the streets to the ears of even the youngest members of society. Unlike the tales of rogues in the One Thousand and One Nights, *which often showed corruption and criminality going unpunished, this tale* *asserts values that would have reassured eighteenth-century readers that the truth could be established and justice secured.*

Halfway through, the tale becomes a Harun al-Rashid story like so many others in the corpus of the Nights. *As usual, the caliph is represented as the ultimate arbiter of justice, but in Diyab's new story, Harun al-Rashid is also willing to be shown the way by ordinary citizens. When he encounters a group of boys playing out the case that he must consider the next day, the caliph is impressed by the careful reasoning of his subjects. Unlike stories such as "The Sleeper and the Waker," where an ordinary citizen is thrown into the role of caliph merely as a joke, the doubling of the figure of the caliph in the tale of Ali Khawaja leads to lessons in the importance of fairness and personal integrity. The reader is left to wonder whether King Shahriyar might also learn from the example provided by these young children.*



The merchant gave him the key to his shop. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

IN THE REIGN of Harun al-Rashid, there lived in Baghdad a merchant[2] named Ali Khawaja, who was neither among the richest nor the poorest, and had neither wife nor child. He had lived for some years in his father's house, content with the slim profits of his trade, when he dreamed three nights in a row that an old man had appeared to him[3] and reminded him with stern eyes that he had yet to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The dream disturbed Ali Khawaja, who had always set his duties as a merchant above his duties as a Muslim, and who had tried to make amends with charity and other good works. Now guilt and fear prevailed on him to delay the journey no longer.

He began by selling his furniture, then all the goods in his shop except for those he might sell on the road, and he found a tenant for his house. All that remained was to find a safe place for a thousand gold coins[4] he could not carry with him. He tipped the coins into a large jar, which he filled to the brim with olives, sealed, and took to another merchant to keep until his return. The merchant gave him the key to his shop and let him take the jar there himself.

On a camel piled high with goods, Ali Khawaja joined a caravan from Baghdad and made the crossing to Mecca. Like other pilgrims, he visited the famous temple,[5] a lodestone for Muslims from every corner of the earth, and when he had performed all his ritual duties, he set out his goods to trade.

Two merchants passing by stopped to admire his wares, and as they walked away, one said to the other, "If this man knew better, he would take his goods to Cairo, where he would get a better price than he can hope for here."

Ali Khawaja caught these words, and since he had often heard talk of the wonders of Egypt, he resolved to go. He joined a caravan headed for Cairo and soon found that he had made the right decision. In a very few days, he had sold all his merchandise at a great profit. He bought new goods with a view to selling them in Damascus, but as the caravan that would take him there did not leave for another six weeks, he feasted on the curiosities of Cairo[6] and saw the pyramids and some of the cities on the banks of the Nile.

When he arrived in Damascus, Ali Khawaja found the city (streams, meadows, gardens) more enchanting than any account of its delights had led him to imagine, and he could not bring himself to leave. At length, he remembered that he had a home in Baghdad, so he made his way back through Aleppo, where he also spent some time before taking the road to Mosul.

By the time he reached Mosul, however, the Iranian merchants with whom he had formed a close friendship on the journey from Aleppo had made such an impression on his mind, by their delicate manners and charming conversation, that they had no difficulty in persuading him to follow them to Shiraz, from where he could easily return to Baghdad after making a considerable profit. They took him through the cities[7] of Soltaniyeh, Rey, Qom, Kashan, Isfahan, and on to Shiraz, where he had the further fortune to accompany them to India and then to return with them to Shiraz.

So it was that seven years had passed since Ali Khawaja had left Baghdad, when at last he resolved to go home. In that time, the friend with whom he had left the jar of olives had never once thought of him or the jar. Then one evening, as Ali Khawaja was on the road back from Shiraz,[8] and the merchant was at dinner with his family, his wife remarked that they had not had olives in some time, and that she wanted some to eat.

“Speaking of olives,” said the merchant, “you remind me that before Ali Khawaja went to Mecca seven years ago, he left a jar of olives in my shop. But where is Ali Khawaja now? Someone told me that he had passed into Egypt, but he has been gone so long he must have died there. We may surely eat the olives if they are still good. Give me a dish and a light. I will fetch some and we will see how they taste.”

“For the love of God,” said his wife, “we will do no such thing. You know that nothing is more sacred[9] than a thing entrusted. Gone for seven years, you say, and into Egypt, and how can you be sure he went no farther? You have had no news of his death: He may be back tomorrow, or the day after. How shameful would it be, for you and your family, if you could not return the jar he left in your care. I have no desire for his olives, nor will I eat them. Besides, do you believe that after all this time they are still good? They will have spoiled. And if Ali Khawaja returns, as I have a feeling he might, and sees that you have dipped into them, what judgment will he form of your friendship and integrity? Give it up, I beg you."

The woman spoke at such length only because she saw by her husband's face that he was fixed on his idea. Indeed, he paid no attention to her good advice; he rose and went to his shop with a light and a dish.

"Remember at least," said his wife, "that I have no part in what you are about to do, and do not blame me if you live to regret it."

The merchant refused to listen. In his shop, he took the jar, opened it, and found the olives all spoiled. To make sure that the ones at the bottom were as bad as the ones he could see, he tipped a few into the dish. As he shook the jar, a few gold coins clattered out.

At the sight of this money, the merchant looked into the jar and saw that he had emptied almost all the olives into the dish, and what remained were gold coins. He put the olives back into the jar, covered it, and left the shop.

"You were right," he said to his wife on his return, "the olives are rotten, and I have closed up the jar in such a way that Ali Khawaja would never think I had touched it."

"You would have done better to believe me," said his wife. "Let no harm come of it."

These words made no more impression on the merchant than the first, and he spent almost the whole night wondering how to keep the gold should Ali Khawaja ever return and claim his jar. Early the next morning, he went to buy fresh olives. He threw out the old ones,[10] took the gold and hid it, then filled the jar with the new olives, sealed it with the same cover, and put it back where Ali Khawaja had left it.

About a month later, Ali Khawaja returned from his long journey to Baghdad, and as his house was still rented, he took a room at a khan[11] to give his lodger time to find another place to live.

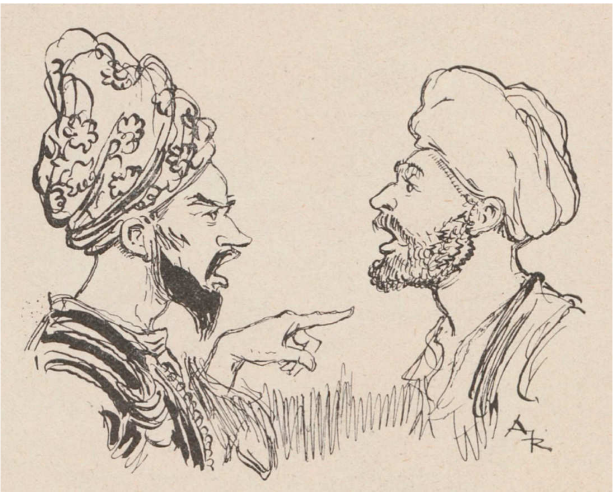
The next day, he went to see his friend the merchant, who received him with joy and open arms. After the usual compliments had been exchanged, Ali Khawaja begged the merchant to return the jar of olives he had left in his care, making his excuses for having stayed away so long.

“My dear friend,” said the merchant, “your jar has brought me no trouble. I would have asked the same favor of you had I been in your shoes. Here is the key to my shop. You will find the jar where you left it.”

Ali Khawaja went to the shop, fetched his jar, and, having returned the key and thanked his friend, returned to his room at the khan. He opened the jar and pushed his hand down through the olives, but he felt no money. To be sure he was not mistaken, he took some dishes from his travel kit and poured out all the olives without finding a single coin. For a moment, he was still with shock.

“Can it be,” he said, “that my good friend has committed such a crime?”

In haste, he went back to the merchant.



Ali Khawaja confronts the merchant. Illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

“My friend,” he said, “the jar I took from your shop is surely mine, but I cannot find in it the thousand gold coins I had hidden under the olives. Perhaps you needed the money and borrowed some for your business. If that is so, you are welcome. I only ask that you give me a receipt, after which you can pay me back at your leisure.”

The merchant, who had seen this coming, had his reply all ready.

“Ali Khawaja,” he said, “when you brought me your jar of olives, did I touch it? Did I not give you the key to my shop? Did you not carry it there yourself and find it in the same place where you left it? If you put gold in it, it must be there. You told me it contained olives, and I believed you. That is all I know. You may believe me or not, but I have not touched it.”

Ali Khawaja tried every gentle means to coax the truth out of the merchant.

“I love peace,” he said, “and would be sorry to resort to extreme measures. Consider that merchants like ourselves must give up all private interests to preserve their reputations. I shall deeply regret it if your obstinacy forces me to call on the law.”

“Ali Khawaja,” said the merchant, “you gave me a jar of olives to hold, you took it back and brought it home, and now you come to demand of me a thousand gold coins! I am not even sure there were olives in it, as you did not show me, but why not ask for pearls and diamonds instead of gold? Take my advice: Go home, and do not attract a crowd around my shop.”[12]

Some had already begun to gather, and, at these last words, delivered in a tone that ran over the bounds of moderation, even the neighboring merchants came out to try to resolve the dispute. They first heard Ali Khawaja’s reasons, then asked the merchant what he had to say.

The merchant admitted that he had kept Ali Khawaja’s jar in his shop, but he denied ever touching it, and swore that he only knew it contained olives because Ali Khawaja had told him so, and he called them all to witness the affront he had suffered in his own house.

“You have brought the affront on yourself,” said Ali Khawaja, “but since you persist, I call on the law of God. Let us see if you will dare repeat your story to the qadi.”[13]

At this summons, which every Muslim must obey or risk rebelling against his religion, the merchant was not reckless enough to refuse.

“Very well,” he said, “we shall soon see which of us is right.”

Ali Khawaja led the merchant to the qadi’s court, where he accused him of stealing a thousand gold coins he had left in his care. The qadi asked Ali Khawaja whether he had any witnesses.[14] He answered that he had not taken this precaution, because he thought the person with whom he left the money was his friend and an honest man.

The merchant said nothing more in his defense than what he had said to Ali Khawaja in the presence of the neighbors, and he offered to swear that not only had he not stolen the thousand coins, but that he did not even know they were there. The qadi let him take the oath, and then pronounced him innocent.

Ali Khawaja, furious at the loss, protested against the sentence and declared to the qadi that he would appeal to Caliph Harun al-Rashid himself. But the qadi paid no attention to this threat, regarding it as the resentment natural to those who lose their case, and he was satisfied that he had done his duty.

As the merchant returned home triumphant, Ali Khawaja went to draw up a petition. The next day, he placed himself on the road where he knew the caliph would pass on his way back from noon prayers. When he passed, he held out his hand with the petition.[15] An officer who walked before the caliph, and whose duty it was to collect such things, stepped out of line and took it.

Ali Khawaja knew that it was the caliph’s custom, when he returned to the palace, to read with his own eyes the petitions he received, so he followed the procession to the palace. Soon the officer appeared and told Ali Khawaja that the caliph had read his petition and had appointed an hour the following day to give him an audience. He then asked for the merchant’s address and had him summoned at the same time.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

That evening, the caliph,[16] with his grand vizier Jaafar, and Masrur, chief of the eunuchs, all three disguised, made their usual excursion into the city. Going down a street, the caliph heard a noise, and through a slit in a door he saw ten or twelve children playing in a courtyard by moonlight. Curious to know their game, he watched them.

“I am the qadi,” said the brightest and quickest of the children. “Bring me Ali Khawaja and the merchant who stole a thousand gold coins from him.”

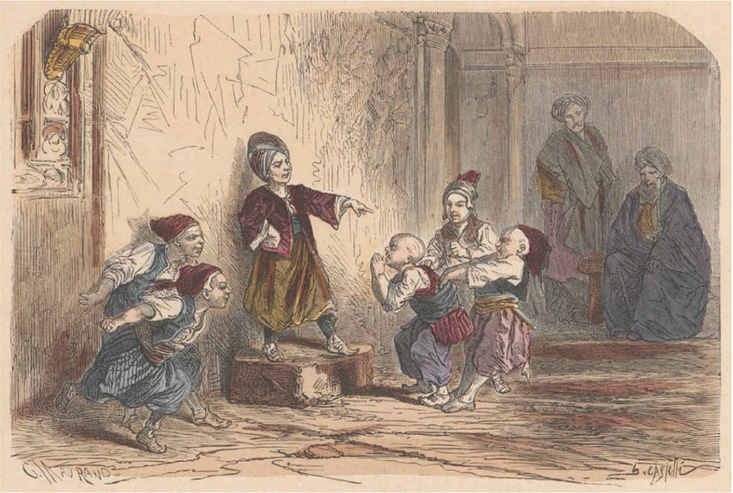
The boy’s words reminded the caliph of the petition he had read that day, and he waited with interest to hear the outcome of the trial.

The children, who had heard much talk of this affair, joyfully agreed and quickly settled which part each one was to play. The qadi gravely took his seat,[17] and an officer introduced first Ali Khawaja and then the merchant.

The false qadi interrogated the pretend Ali Khawaja, who bowed low and pleaded his case point by point, imploring the qadi to spare him such a heavy loss.

The qadi, having heard Ali Khawaja’s case, turned to the merchant and asked why he had not returned the money. The make-believe merchant repeated the reasons that the real one had given to the qadi of Baghdad, and he offered to swear that he told the truth.

“Not so fast,” said the qadi. “Before we come to swearing, I would like to see the jar of olives. Ali Khawaja,” he said to the boy who played that role, “go and fetch it.”



The children judge the case of Ali Khawaja and the merchant who stole a thousand gold coins. From Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

The mock Ali Khawaja disappeared for a moment, and then returned and pretended to place a vase at the qadi’s feet, declaring it to be the vase he had deposited with the merchant. To complete the ritual, the qadi asked the merchant whether he recognized the vase, and, as the merchant proved by his silence that he could not deny it, commanded to have it opened. The fake Ali Khawaja pretended to lift the lid, and the pseudo-qadi made a show of peering inside.

“What beautiful olives!” said the fake qadi. “Let me taste one.”

He pretended to eat one and pronounced it excellent.

“But,” he went on, “it seems to me that seven-year-old olives should not be so good. Send for some olive merchants,[18] and let us hear what they say.”

Two boys were brought before him.

“Tell me,” said the fake qadi, “if olives are prepared by those who make it their business, how long will they be good to eat?”

“My lord,” said the so-called merchants, “whatever care is taken to preserve them, they are good for nothing after the third year. They lose both taste and color and are fit only to be thrown away.”

“If that is so,” said the qadi, “examine this vase, and tell me how long the olives have been in it.”

The merchants pretended to inspect and taste the olives and told the qadi they were fresh.

“You are mistaken,” said the qadi. “Ali Khawaja says he put them in seven years ago.”

“What is certain,” said the merchants, “is that the olives are of this year. Any merchant in Baghdad will say the same.”

The accused merchant was going to protest, but the qadi did not let him.

“Be quiet,” he said. “You are a thief. Hang him.”

The children clapped their hands in glee, and, throwing themselves on the boy, led him away to be hanged.

Harun al-Rashid was lost in wonder at the wisdom of the child, who had given so shrewd a judgment on the case he was to hear the following day. He stepped back from the door and turned to his grand vizier, who was as amazed as he was.

"Is another judgment possible?" asked the caliph.

"If the circumstances are the same," said the vizier, "I can imagine no better course than to follow this boy's example."

"Remember this house," said the caliph, "and bring me the boy tomorrow, so that he may judge the case in my presence. Summon also the qadi who absolved the thief,[19] that he may learn his duty from a child. Tell Ali Khawaja to bring his jar of olives, and see that two olive merchants are also present."

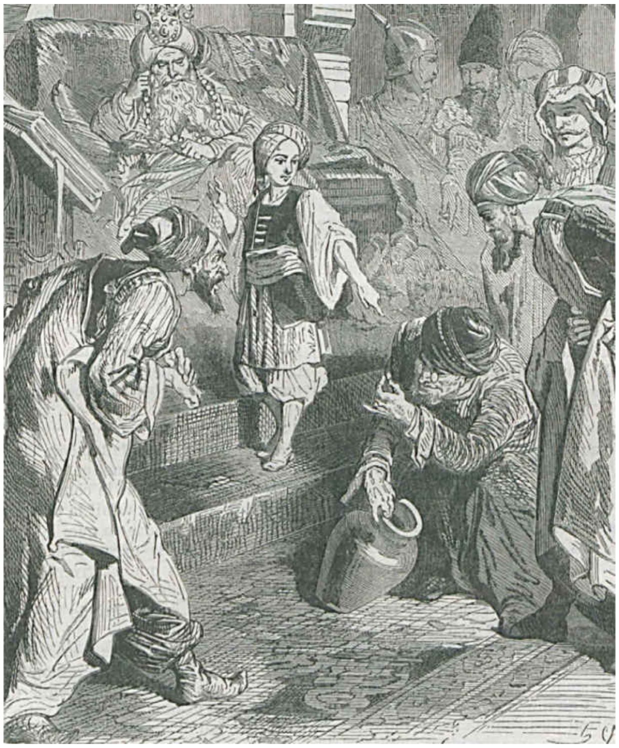
The next day, the grand vizier returned to that house and asked the mistress to call her children. Three boys appeared, and the vizier asked which of them had played the qadi in their game the previous night. The eldest said it was he.

"Come with me," said the vizier. "The caliph would like to see you."

The mother was alarmed, but the vizier reassured her that her son would be returned within the hour, and that the reason for the summons would set her mind at rest. So she dressed him in his best clothes, and the grand vizier brought the child before the caliph at the hour he had given for the audience.

The caliph, seeing the child a little afraid,[20] and wanting to prepare him for what was to come, said, "Come here, my boy. Was it you who judged the case of Ali Khawaja and the merchant who stole his gold? I happened to overhear you and was very impressed. Today you will see the real Ali Khawaja and the real merchant. Come and sit beside me."

When they were all seated, the parties were ushered in.



The vase of olives was given to the expert merchants to inspect. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

“Plead your case one after the other,” said the caliph. “This child will give you justice,[21] and if the judgment is lacking, I will see to it myself.”

The defendant and the plaintiff spoke in turn, and when the merchant offered to take an oath, the child said it was not yet time, and that first they must see the jar of olives.

Ali Khawaja placed the jar at the caliph’s feet and opened it. The caliph chose one to taste. Then the vase was given to the expert merchants to inspect, and they declared that the olives were fresh and from that year’s growth. The child said that Ali Khawaja swore they had been there for seven years, to which the merchants gave the same answer as the children had done.

Though the merchant saw by now that his condemnation was certain, he made a final attempt at his own defense. The boy, however, did not order that he be hanged. Instead, he looked at the caliph.

“Commander of the Faithful,” he said, “this is not a game.[22] It is for Your Majesty to condemn him to death and not for me.”

The caliph, convinced the merchant was a liar and a thief, gave him up to be hanged, and the sentence was executed after he revealed where he had hidden the gold, which was returned to Ali Khawaja. The caliph, full of justice and fairness, told the real qadi to learn from the child's example. Then he embraced the boy and sent him home with a purse containing a hundred gold coins to show his gratitude.

* * *

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1. *Ali Khawaja, Merchant of Baghdad:* Also see notes from Hanna Diyab's original version of this story in Part III.

2. *there lived in Baghdad a merchant:* The story told by Hanna Diyab to Galland on May 29, 1708, is clearly positioned in the tradition of the *1001 Nights* by its location in the Baghdad of Caliph Harun al-Rashid and its focus on the concerns of the merchant class that is considered the principal audience for the Arabic story collection.

3. *he dreamed three nights in a row that an old man had appeared to him:* Dreams often appear as a narrative device in the stories of the *Nights*, where they serve to prophesy the future and, in many cases, to ensure that that future will come to pass. While dream interpretation in medieval Islamic society was a very sophisticated practice, the meanings of dreams in the *Nights* tend to be easily accessible, as in this story.

4. *find a safe place for a thousand gold coins:* The real-life challenge of securing one's property is at the heart of this tale, and it reflects the concerns of the merchant class depicted in the story. Hanna Diyab had apprenticed with a French merchant in Aleppo for much of his childhood, so he understood the practical issues raised in this tale.

5. *the famous temple:* The chief destination for Ali Khawaja as he completes the Hajj is the Kaaba, located at the center of the most important mosque in the city of Mecca. Completing the Hajj once in one's life is obligatory for every Muslim who is physically and financially capable of doing so. Here the translator has preserved Galland's use of "temple" to describe this most sacred site in Islam.

6. *he feasted on the curiosities of Cairo:* The journey of Ali Khawaja takes him through some of the great trading centers of the Middle East. Galland expands this itinerary by providing his version of sightseeing advice for readers. Hanna Diyab had visited Cairo on his trip from Aleppo to Paris and had toured the monuments and ruins of Cairo, but there is no evidence that these descriptions came from him.

7. *They took him through the cities:* Galland inserts a lesson on Iranian geography, based on the historical texts with which he was familiar.

8. *as Ali Khawaja was on the road back from Shiraz:* These efforts to suggest the simultaneity of events within the plot resemble similar patterns in "The Story of Dalila the Crafty." In narratives such as this one, the *Arabian Nights* tales pointed the way to the more complex plots of the eighteenth-century novel.

9. *"You know that nothing is more sacred":* The conflict between the merchant and his wife was present in Diyab's recital of the tale, but Galland has expanded the scene with dialogue to emphasize the themes he believes are integral to the story. The importance of a merchant's integrity is clearly stated for the European readers of the story.

10. *He threw out the old ones:* The narrator includes precise details that will be critical to the plot later, just as he did in "The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

11. *he took a room at a khan:* "Khans were roadside or inner-town inns, charitable foundations that provided merchants and travelers with food and shelter," Yasmine Seale writes. "Among the most famous examples are Khan As'ad Pasha in the Old City of Damascus, Khan el-Khalili in Cairo, and Büyük Han, one of the finest buildings on the island of Cyprus. With their open courtyards and colonnades, khans were among the defining structures of the Ottoman world and essential to trade along the Silk Road."

12. *"do not attract a crowd around my shop":* This dialogue between Ali Khawaja and the merchant is improvised by Galland to enliven the story and ensure that the issues at stake are clear. His emphasis on the undesirability of playing out this conflict in public emphasizes the importance of communal consensus in this urban context. When the merchant later calls on people to witness the insult that Ali Khawaja has delivered to him, he begins a series of events that will eventually lead to his downfall. Knowledge is quickly transmitted in this close-knit community, and it will reach everyone from young to old.

13. *"repeat your story to the qadi":* The qadi is a locally appointed judge trained in one of the schools of Islamic law.

14. *asked Ali Khawaja whether he had any witnesses:* The importance of the testimony of eyewitnesses in Islamic law is apparent in the failure of Ali Khawaja's case.

15. *held out his hand with the petition:* In the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as in other Islamic empires, the possibility of appealing directly to the ruler was a cornerstone of the political system. Diyab mentioned a petition to the caliph in the tale he told to Galland, and the French translator expands this plot element for his readers at a time when some imagined that this kind of direct access to the French monarch would be desirable for relieving popular discontent.

16. *That evening, the caliph:* Hanna Diyab uses the narrative device of Harun al-Rashid's nocturnal expeditions through Baghdad disguised as a merchant to position this story within the Harun story cycle, an important element in the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

17. *The qadi gravely took his seat:* Galland elaborates the scenes involving the children to emphasize the seriousness with which they consider the issues of truth and justice. The idea that a false qadi could offer an object lesson for a ruler is taken up by Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz in *Arabian Nights and Days* (1979), where his sultan Shahriyar stumbles upon an alternative court during one of his nocturnal strolls.

18. *"Send for some olive merchants":* The children follow the essential protocols of a modern procedural by carefully considering the physical evidence and calling expert witnesses to offer testimony that will allow the judge to uncover the true crime at the heart of this story. This is the closest that the *Arabian Nights* comes to offering a modern crime story to its readers. Peter Caracciolo argues that these scenes offered inspiration for the detection plot embedded in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, one of the earliest mystery novels (pp. 152–53).

19. *"Summon also the qadi who absolved the thief":* The summary of this story in Galland's diary does not mention this detail, but this command gives added weight to the popular myth that Harun al-Rashid's covert inspections of his city could lead to the rectification of injustices. It was likely a particularly appealing myth in early eighteenth-century France.

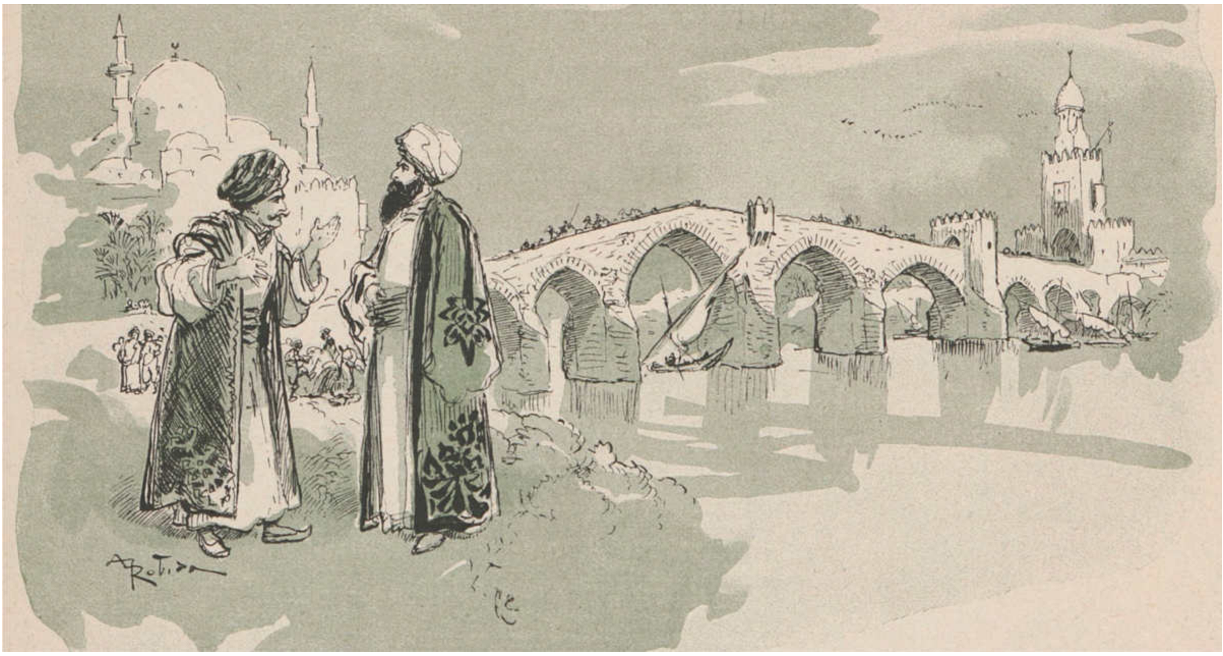
20. *The caliph, seeing the child a little afraid:* This version of Harun al-Rashid follows the idealized portrait that appears in "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid," another of the tales added to the *Arabian Nights* by Diyab and Galland. The legend of Harun al-Rashid was taken up by European audiences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the French opera *Le Calife de Bagdad*, first performed in Paris in 1800, Harun is roaming the streets of the city in disguise when he rescues a young woman from a band of robbers. They fall in love but are allowed to marry only after the caliph's true identity is revealed. The popularity of such plots reveals an attraction to the notion that a ruler might actually understand and sympathize with his plebeian subjects.

21. *"This child will give you justice":* Other stories in the *Arabian Nights* feature an ordinary person taking on the role of the caliph temporarily. In "The Sleeper and the Waker," Harun al-Rashid plays a joke on a merchant by drugging him, taking him to the palace, and pretending that he is the caliph. He is actually allowed to order the vizier to flog several sheikhs against whom he bears a grudge.

22. *"this is not a game":* The power of the caliph is emphasized by Galland as the story ends, to signal a return to order. This might be seen as legitimizing the worldview of the merchant classes, who are assured that property is secure and the power of the caliph will be justly exercised.

THE NIGHT ADVENTURES OF HARUN AL-RASHID

The sequence of three tales that make up "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid" begins in a fashion familiar from other stories of the One Thousand and One Nights. *The caliph is walking the city of Baghdad in search of some distraction from the melancholia that plagues him, and he quickly finds himself in several strange encounters. A blind beggar demands that passing strangers strike him, and then a young man viciously whips a horse in full view of shocked onlookers. Baghdad proves to be a city of stories, and the caliph must discover them all, and so the tales unfold the next day at the sultan's palace—revealing strange twists of fate, the dangers of greed, and the impenetrable strangeness that lurks behind the most ordinary of circumstances.*



Caliph Harun al-Rashid in Baghdad. Illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

The Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab told this cycle of tales[1] *to Antoine Galland in two meetings in May 1709, and it was published in the eleventh volume of* Les mille et une nuits *in 1717. Each of these three stories draws on strands within the rich tradition of Middle Eastern oral narrative and plays upon established themes within the stories of the* One Thousand and One Nights. *In "The Tale of Baba Abdallah," Diyab takes his listener into the deserts traversed by merchant caravans to provide a powerful demonstration of the lure of treasure and the destructive consequences of greed. The danger from unrestrained appetites also runs through "The Tale of Sidi Numan," where a young husband learns to see the world through new eyes when his magician-wife transforms him into a dog.*

Both these tales offer some of the most unsettling examples of supernatural agency in the stories added to the Arabian Nights *by Diyab and Galland. The danger to Baba Abdallah comes in the form of a seemingly harmless dervish, who nevertheless exposes the ravenous greed in the already prosperous merchant. The danger to Sidi Numan comes in the apparent perfection of a young wife whose real needs her husband cannot fathom until it is too late. Her sudden transformation into a fearsome magician with a taste for human flesh is matched by his sudden* *transformation into a vulnerable animal, and the reader is suddenly thrust into the uncanny.*

After the strangeness of those two tales, "The Tale of Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal" seems particularly comforting. On its face, it is a simple exploration of the ups and downs of a ropemaker's life, delivered in a realist mode, but then the tale is decisively transformed by the arrival of a sparkling diamond, and the narrative plays out as the obverse of Sidi Numan's passage from the easy comfort of domesticity to the position of a marginalized animal trying to survive in the city's markets. The intervention of fate in both these men's lives will remain unexplained, but both will benefit in the end. If the humble ropemaker finds himself a wealthy merchant after years of struggle, Sidi Numan will emerge from his transformed state with greater insight into the darkness that lurks in familiar places.

SOMETIMES, AS YOUR Majesty may know from experience,[2] we find ourselves so transported that we cannot help but express our delight to all those we encounter, and we join easily in theirs. Other times, we are in sorrow so deep we can hardly suffer ourselves, yet we are unable to name the cause.

One day, the caliph was in that state of mind when Jaafar, his faithful grand vizier, came before him. He found him alone, which was rare, and in a dark mood, eyes cast down. Waiting for them to meet his, he stopped.

At last, the caliph looked up and saw Jaafar, but he made no movement and then lowered his gaze once more. The grand vizier, who had not detected in the caliph's eyes any anger directed at himself, broke the silence.

"Commander of Believers," he said, "may I ask what lies behind your sorrow, you who have never seemed to me to be inclined to it?"

"It is true," replied the caliph, "that I am hardly ever subject to sadness, and without you, I might not even have noticed the gloom you find me in now. If nothing new has brought you here today, you would do me a great service by inventing something to dispel it."[3]

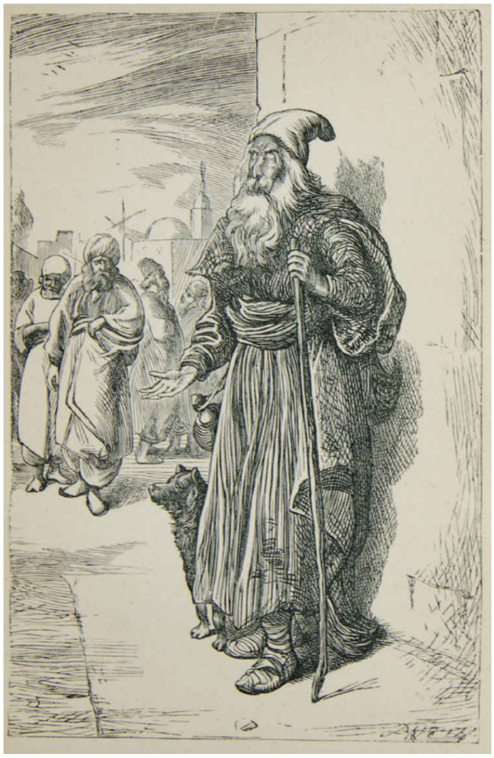
"Commander of Believers," said Jaafar, "duty alone has led me here. Allow me to remind Your Majesty that you have taken it upon yourself to observe in person the effects of your good government[4] on your capital and its borders. Today is the day you had chosen to acquit yourself of that task, and I can think of no better occasion to banish the clouds that darken your usual cheer."

"I had forgotten," said the caliph, "and you have done well to remind me. Go and change while I do the same."

They each put on the clothes of foreign merchants,[5] and in this disguise they left through a secret gate in the palace garden, which led out to the fields. They circled the city until they reached the banks of the Euphrates, without seeing any breach in public order, and they crossed the river on the first boat. Having completed their orbit of the far side of the city, they took the road to the bridge that led to back to it.

At the end of the bridge,[6] they met a blind man of a certain age, who was begging. Turning his eyes away, the caliph gave him a gold coin. At once, the man took his hand and stopped him.

"Kind soul," said the blind man, "whoever you are, do not refuse me this kindness: give me a slap. I deserve it, and harsher things besides."



"They met a blind man of a certain age, who was begging." Illustration from The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, *by George Fyler Townsend (London: Frederick Warne, 1860).*

At these words, he freed the caliph's hand, but lest he get away without delivering the slap, he seized him by the coat.

Shocked by this, the caliph said, "Good man, I cannot grant you what you ask. Such treatment would cancel my good deed." He struggled to free himself.

The blind man, who knew this was coming, tightened his grip. "My lord," he said, "forgive my boldness. Please, give me a slap or take back your coin. I cannot accept one without the other, or I would be in breach of a pledge I made before God. If you knew the reason, you would agree it is only a mild sentence.”

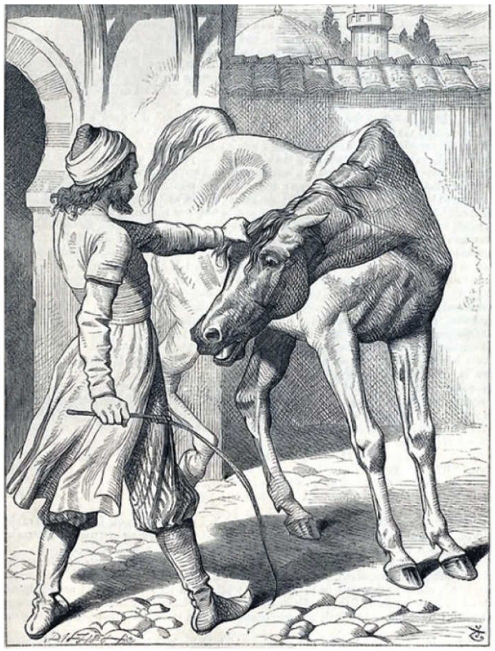
The caliph, who did not want to attract attention, yielded to the blind man’s persistence and slapped him lightly on the cheek. The man let go at once, thanked him and blessed him. The caliph went on his way with the grand vizier, but after a few paces, he said, “Whatever led that man to behave in such a way must be a serious matter. Go back, tell him who I am, and let him come to the palace tomorrow after evening prayers.”

The grand vizier turned back, gave the man a coin and a slap, and delivered the caliph’s message. Then they proceeded to the city. Passing through a square, they came upon a large crowd watching a young man mounted on a mare, which he sent flying around the place with merciless cracks of his whip[7] that had left her covered in her own froth and blood.

Stunned by the young man’s cruelty, the caliph stopped to ask what grounds he had for treating his horse in this way. He received no answer but was told that, for some time now, the young man appeared at the same hour every day to perform this painful exercise.

They kept walking, and the caliph told his vizier to take note of the square, and to invite the young man to the palace the following day at the same time as the blind man.

Before returning to the palace, in a street he had not visited for some time, the caliph noticed a newly built house,[8] which he thought must belong to one of his courtiers. He asked his grand vizier to inquire. The vizier learned from a neighbor that the house belonged to Khawaja Hasan, known as al-Habbal because he was a ropemaker, who had labored in poverty until, without knowing how fortune had favored him, he had come into such wealth that such a splendid home was now within his means.



The caliph asked what grounds he had to treat his horse this way. Illustration by John Tenniel from Dalziel's Illustrated Arabian Nights' Entertainments *(1865). Tenniel is best known for his political cartoons for* Punch *magazine, but he was among many prominent illustrators who contributed to the* Nights *edition prepared by Thomas and Edward Dalziel.*

The grand vizier transmitted what he knew to the caliph, who said, "I want to see this Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal. Go, tell him to come to the palace tomorrow at the same time as the others."

The following day, after evening prayers, the caliph went to his apartment, where the grand vizier brought to him the three characters we have mentioned. All three bowed low before the throne, and when they rose, the caliph asked the blind man for his name.

"My name is Baba Abdallah," said the blind man.

"Baba Abdallah," said the caliph, "your way of begging yesterday appeared so strange to me that, had I not been detained by other matters, I would not have indulged you as I did, and would have put an end to such behavior. You have been brought here to explain the reason for your curious pledge. By what you say, I will judge whether you are right,[9] and whether I should permit you to continue to set such a poor example. Tell me, then, without deceit, the source of your bizarre idea."

Intimidated, Baba Abdallah pressed his head to the ground a second time, then rose and said, "Commander of Believers, I beg Your Majesty's pardon for what seems, in truth, a mad request. I recognize my crime, but since I did not know then that it was you, I implore your mercy. As for what you call bizarre, I grant that it is so in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God, it is the modest price of an enormous sin of mine, for which I would not find atonement even if all humanity lined up to slap me one after the other. But I will let Your Majesty be the judge. Without ado, here is the story of my transgression. …”

* * *

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF BABA ABDALLAH

“Commander of the Faithful,” said Baba Abdallah, “I was born in Baghdad[10] and came into some money when my parents died only days apart. Though I was not advanced in years, I did not spend my wealth in the manner of a young man, squandering it on pleasure. Instead, I did all I could to increase it through hard work. At last, I was able to acquire eighty camels, which I loaned to the caravan merchants, earning me vast sums wherever I traveled in Your Majesty’s empire.

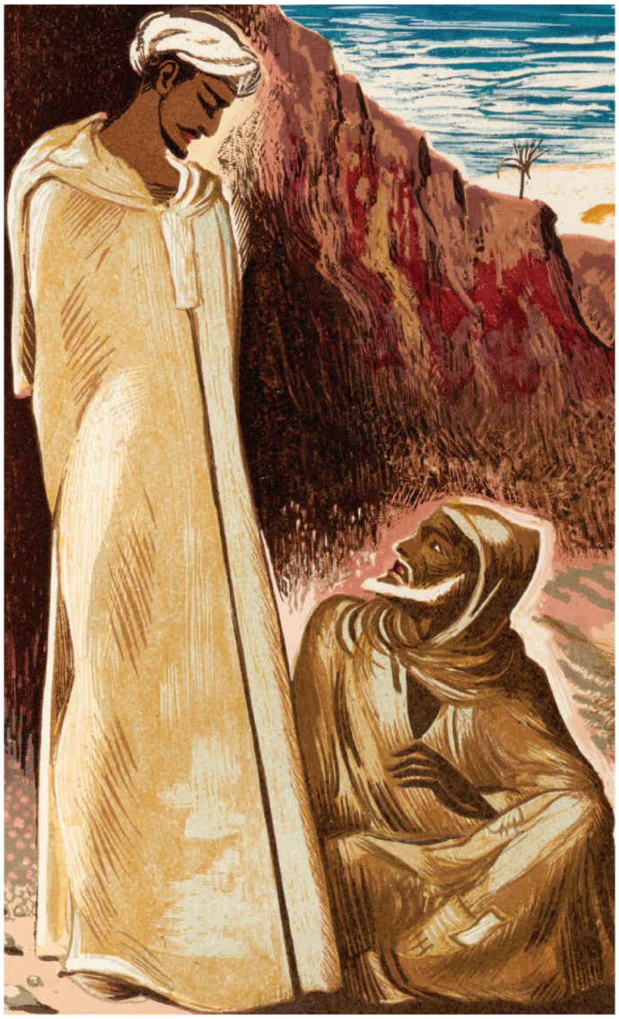
One day, as I returned from Basra, my camels unburdened of their goods, I put them to graze in a pasture where I met a dervish[11] on his way to the city. He sat by my side to rest, and I asked him where he was from. He asked the same of me, and when we had each satisfied our curiosity, we pooled our provisions and broke bread together.

While we were eating, after we had talked of this and that, the dervish mentioned that he knew of a place, not far from where we sat, that was so filled with treasure that if each of my eighty camels were loaded with its gold and gems, it would hardly seem that any had been removed.

I did not think the dervish capable of deceiving me, so I flung my arms around his neck and said, “Good dervish, since you have so little care for the riches of this world, what good is this treasure to you? Besides, you could hardly carry more than a handful on your own. Tell me where it is: I will load my eighty camels with the loot and give you one in thanks.”

Though my offer was not generous, it seemed a fortune to me, for a wave of greed had surged over my heart at his words, and I felt as though the seventy-nine remaining camels hardly counted against the one I was proposing to give up.

The dervish noticed my strange hunger for gold, but he did not take offense at my proposal. “Brother,” he said calmly, “you know as well as I do that your offer is unjust. I could have held my tongue and kept the treasure for myself. That I have told you my secret should leave you in no doubt about my good intention, which is to make your fortune as well as mine. You say you have eighty camels. I will lead you to the treasure and we will load them all with gold and gems, on the condition that you give me half of them and keep the other half. Then we shall go our separate ways. You see that nothing could be fairer, for if you give me forty camels, I will give you the means to buy a thousand more.”



Meeting the dervish. Illustration by François-Louis Schmied from L’agneau du Moghreb *(1942), created during the artist’s exile in Morocco.*

I could not deny that this was just.[12] Yet regardless of the wealth that would be mine if I accepted, the thought of losing half my camels caused me pain, and I could not bear the thought of the dervish being as rich as I would be. Picking holes in his good deed before he had even performed it! But there was no use dithering. I had to accept his condition or spend my life regretting the fortune I had missed.

I herded my camels and we set out together. After walking some time, we reached a pass so narrow that my camels had to enter one by one. Soon it widened enough for them to stand together at ease. The valley lay between two sheer mountains, too high for any human to scale.

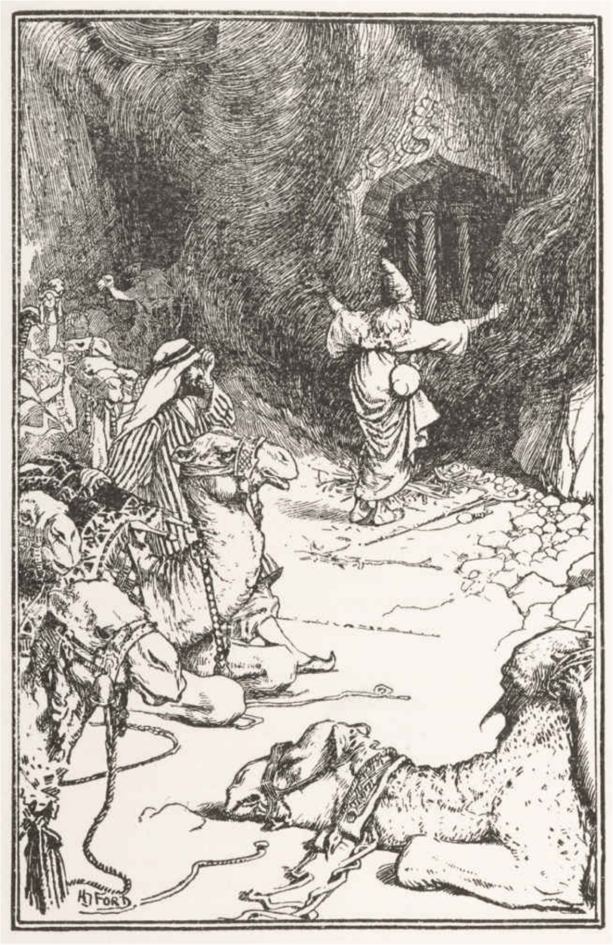
When we were exactly between these mountains, the dervish said, “Let us stop here and let the camels lie down, the better to load them. Then I will take you to the treasure.”

I did what I was told, then the dervish lit a fire and scattered it with drops of fragrant oil,[13] uttering words I could not catch. The air filled with smoke, which he parted in two, and there appeared an opening in the rock. The crag divided to reveal a splendid palace, which seemed the work of jinn rather than men.

But, Commander of the Faithful, this is hindsight speaking. At the time, I hardly noticed any of the riches that lay all around me, but fell upon the first pile of gold like an eagle on its prey, and I began to heap as much as I could carry into one of the sacks I had brought with me. The sacks were large, and I would readily have filled them all, but I had to consider the strength of my camels.

The dervish also set to work, but I saw that he paid more attention to gems than to gold. Judging that he must have a good reason, I followed his example. At length, all the sacks were filled and the camels were loaded with our loot. Nothing remained but to seal up the treasure and be on our way.

Before we set off, the dervish slipped back inside. Out of a tall golden vase I saw him take a small wooden box, which he pocketed after showing me it contained nothing but a kind of ointment. Then he performed the same ritual as before, and when the magic words were spoken, the rock face closed over once more.



“The crag divided to reveal a splendid palace.” Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

We divided the camels between us. I took command of my forty and he of his, and we rode out of the valley until the route forked and we had to part, he to Basra and I home to Baghdad. I thanked him for his kindness, then we embraced and said good-bye.

I had not taken more than a few steps when the demon of ingratitude and envy gripped my heart.[14] I mourned the loss of my forty camels and the riches they carried. “What good are they to the dervish?” I thought. “He has the key to the treasure; he can have as much as he wants.” I gave in to the darkest thoughts.

I stopped my camels and ran back after the dervish. “Brother,” I said, “as we parted, a thought occurred to me. You are a good dervish, accustomed to a quiet life far from the cares of this world, concerned only with serving God. Perhaps you are unaware of the burden you have taken on by leading away such a great number of camels. Believe me, you cannot hope to manage more than thirty, and you will find those trouble enough.”

“You are right,” replied the dervish, who had no desire to argue with me. “I had not thought about it. Choose any ten you like, and God be with you.”

I picked out ten camels and prepared to lead them back to those I had left behind. I had not thought the dervish would be persuaded so easily. This only fed my greed, and I flattered myself that I would have no trouble obtaining ten more. Instead of thanking him for his gift, I went further.

“Brother, I could not walk away in good conscience if I did not remind you that keeping thirty camels together is no easy task. For a man new to such work, it is near impossible. You would be much happier if you entrusted ten more of them to me. I have no concern but your welfare, and to me it is all the same to drive one camel or a hundred.”

My words had the intended effect. The dervish gave me ten more camels without resistance, leaving only twenty for himself, while I was now in command of sixty beasts, whose combined value surpassed the wealth of many kings. I should, at this point, have been satisfied.

And yet, Commander of the Faithful, like one suffering from dropsy, who grows thirstier the more he drinks, I could not rest until I had reclaimed every last camel from the dervish. Turning back to him, I redoubled my prayers and appeals, and before long he had granted me ten more. As for the remaining ten, I fell upon him with kisses and pleas and promises of eternal gratitude, until at last he gave in.

“Use them well, my brother,” he said, “and remember that riches may be taken away[15] as swiftly as they are given, if they are not used to relieve the poor.”

Dazzled by gold, I paid no heed to his counsel. My eighty camels and the uncountable fortune they carried were not enough. It occurred to me that the little box of ointment that the dervish had shown me might yet contain something even more precious than all the riches I owed to him.

We said our good-byes. “By the way,” I added, “what are you going to do with that little box of ointment? It seems hardly worth taking with you.

Why don’t you leave it with me? I cannot imagine that a dervish who has given up the vanity of the world has any need for ointment.”

If only he had refused! But then, even if he had, I was no longer in control of myself. I was stronger than he was and would have taken it by force. Far from refusing, the dervish held it out to me with all the grace in the world. “Take it, brother, and if there is anything else I can do, you need only ask.”

As soon as I had the box in my hands, I pried it open and considered its contents. “Since you are so kind,” I said, “would you tell me the virtues of this ointment?”[16]

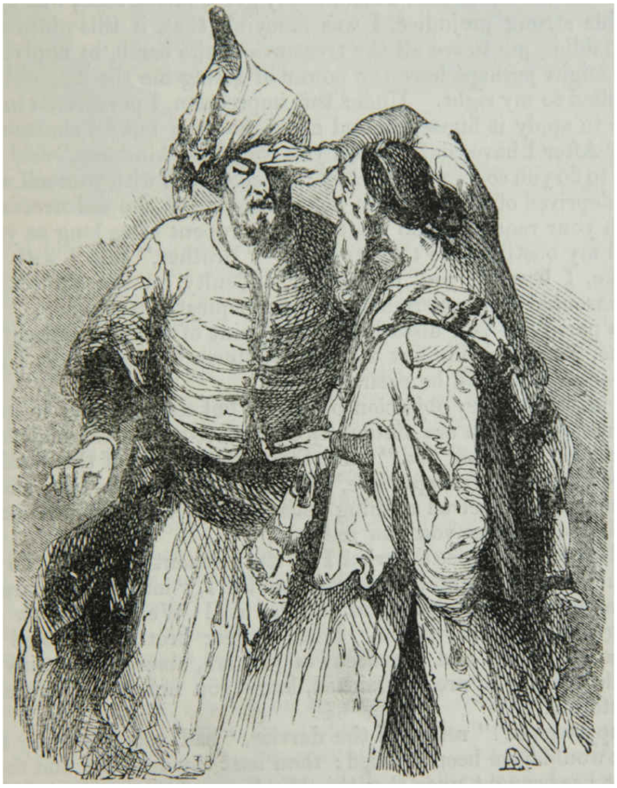
“Its virtues are marvelous and strange,” said the dervish. “If you apply a little of it to your left eyelid, it will reveal to you all the treasures that are hidden in the bowels of the earth. But if any should touch your right eye, it will blind you.”

I burned with excitement. “Here,” I said, “put some on my left eye. You will know how to do it better than I would. I long to see its effect.”

The dervish did not protest. He made me close my left eye and applied the ointment. When I opened it again, I saw that he had told the truth. Countless treasures were revealed to me, so splendid and so various that they were beyond description. But the strain of keeping my right eye shut was beginning to bother me, and I asked the dervish to apply the ointment there, too.

“I will do as you like,” said the dervish, “but you must remember what I told you: If it touches your right eye, it will blind you on the spot.”

It should have been clear to me by now that the dervish told the truth. But I became convinced that he was now concealing some other mystery from me.



The dervish applied the ointment. Illustration from Edward Forster’s 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.

“Brother,” I said with a smile, “I see you take me for a fool. It is not natural that the same ointment should have two opposite effects.”

“And yet,” said the dervish, “it is true. You would do well to believe me.”

But I could not. Aching to gaze on all the treasures of the earth,[17] and perhaps also to possess them, I ignored his warning. I imagined that if this ointment had the power to show me such riches, perhaps it could also lead me to them. I pressed the dervish to anoint my right eye.

“After the good I have done you,” he said, “I cannot bring myself to cause you harm. Think what it is to be blind, and do not force me to do what you will live to regret.”

“Brother,” I said firmly, “you have said enough. Let us not spoil our friendship over this. For God’s sake, do what I ask. Whatever happens will be my fault alone.”

The dervish tried to resist, but seeing that I was prepared to use force, at last he took some of the terrible ointment and applied it to my right eyelid. When I tried to open it, thick darkness surrounded me. I was blind, as you see me now.

"Dervish!" I cried, "Into what misery has my greed plunged me! But you, brother, who are so kind and know so many secrets, will you tell me how to recover my sight?"

"Poor man," said the dervish, "I did what I could to spare you from this fate, but it is what you deserve.[18] The blindness of your heart has led to the blindness of your body. Yes, I have secrets. You have seen as much in the short time we have known each other. But I have none that will give you back your sight. Pray to God, if you think there is one; only He can help you. You have proved yourself unworthy of the riches you were given. Now they will pass into the hands of others who deserve them."

The dervish said no more and left me there alone, speechless with pain and confusion, while he collected my eighty camels and went on his way to Basra. I begged him not to abandon me, but at least to take me to the nearest caravan. But he was unmoved, and I would have died of hunger if a caravan had not come my way the next morning and brought me back to Baghdad.

From princely wealth, I had been reduced to total deprivation, and since that day I have lived entirely on alms. But, in order to redeem my sin, I oblige each passerby to strike me on the face.

This, Commander of the Faithful, is my story. I beg your forgiveness once again for having displeased you. As for the punishment I have imposed on myself, I daresay that you will find it too mild."

When the blind man had finished, the caliph spoke.

"Baba Abdallah," he said, "your sin is great, but you have recognized its gravity and shown remorse. That is enough. Now you must repent in private,[19] and to relieve you of the need to beg, I shall give you alms. My grand vizier will see to it that you receive four silver coins each day for the rest of your life."

At these words, Baba Abdallah threw himself at the caliph's feet, then rose and covered him in thanks and wished him every joy.

Then the caliph turned to the young man he had seen abusing his horse, and asked for his name. Sidi Numan was the answer.

“Sidi Numan,” the caliph said, “I have seen horses broken all my life, and have even broken them myself, but I have never seen anyone treat a horse as savagely as you did yesterday in public, to the noisy indignation of the crowd. I was indignant, too, and it would have taken little more for me to unmask myself and put an end to the disorder.[20] Still, yours is not the manner of a cruel man, and I would like to think that you did not resort to force without some reason. Since I know that yesterday was not the first occasion, and that you have tormented your horse every day for some time, I want to know why. Tell me all, and conceal nothing.”

Sidi Numan changed color,[21] and, despite himself, betrayed the delicate position he was in. He knew he had to speak. Bowing low before the throne, he tried to give an answer to the caliph, but the words stuck in his throat and he could not, less agitated by the presence of the caliph than by the nature of the story he had been compelled to tell.

Keen as he was to be obeyed, the caliph did not resent the young man’s silence, but he guessed at his unease and tried to soothe him.

“Take courage,” said the caliph, “and think of me not as a caliph but as a friend. If there is anything in your story that you fear may offend me, know that I forgive you in advance. Banish your fears, then, and speak to me as openly as you would to a dear friend.”

Calmer now, the young man spoke.

“Dazzled though I am,” he said, “to approach Your Majesty and look upon your throne, I am ready to obey. I am not a perfect man, nor am I so wicked as to seek to break the law. Whatever my intentions, I submit to Your Majesty’s judgment and will be punished if you find I have deserved it. I admit that the treatment of my horse is strange and cruel, and sets a poor example, but I hope that you will see it is well founded, and you will look on me with pity more than blame when you have heard my story....”

* * *

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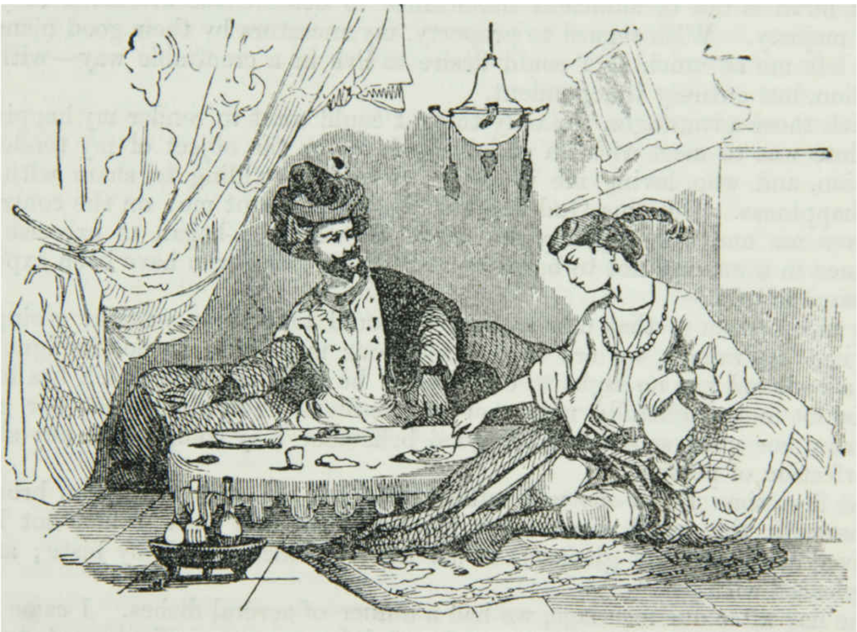


Sidi Numan dines with his wife, Amina. Illustration from Edward Forster’s 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.

THE TALE OF SIDI NUMAN

“COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL,” said Sidi Numan, “I shall pass over my birth; it is too modest to merit Your Majesty’s attention. As for worldly goods, my ancestors were careful people, and thanks to them, I am able to live as a gentleman, without debt or labor.

Being so fortunate, all I might have wanted to complete my happiness was a decent wife who could return my affection, but I was not granted that blessing. Instead, I was cursed with a bride who, from the very first day of our marriage, began to try my patience in ways unimaginable to any who had not suffered what I had.[22]

As custom requires that we marry without so much as a glance[23] at the woman we are to spend our lives with, Your Majesty knows that a man has no reason to complain as long as his bride is not repulsive or misshapen, or rather, as long as a sound mind and pleasant manners make up for any blemishes she may have.

The first time I saw my wife uncovered, when they brought her to my home with the usual ceremonies, I was delighted to find that I had not been misled about her beauty. She was just to my taste. We were going to be happy.

The following day, a feast was laid for us, but I found myself waiting alone at the table. At length my wife appeared, and as we took our seats, I drew a veil over my impatience. First I helped myself to rice, in the usual way, with a spoon. My wife, shunning the spoon, instead produced from her pocket a case, out of which came a sort of earpick with which she proceeded to lift the rice to her mouth one grain at a time,[24] for it could carry no more.

Alarmed by this way of eating, I said, “Amina (for that was her name), is this how you eat rice at home? Is it because you are a small eater, or do you count the grains so as never to eat more one day than the next? Is it waste that worries you? If you are trying to teach me a lesson in thrift, have no fear: We shall never ruin ourselves that way. Thanks to heaven we have enough to live comfortably, so please do not deprive yourself, dear Amina, and eat as you see me eat.”

I expected my good-natured chiding to prompt a response in kind, but she continued to pick at the rice in that way of hers without saying a word, leaving longer and longer gaps between mouthfuls just to upset me. When I moved on to the other dishes, she restricted herself to a few crumbs, no more than a sparrow would have taken, which she carried to her mouth at odd intervals.

Her mulishness appalled me.[25] But I decided, out of mercy, that she was perhaps not used to eating in the presence of men, least of all a husband, and that she had simply taken the notion of wifely restraint a little too literally. Perhaps she had already eaten, or perhaps she was holding back so as to eat alone, unhindered, later. These deliberations stopped me from saying anything that might have upset her further. After lunch, I took my leave exactly as I would have done, had she not profoundly disturbed me with her strange behavior, and withdrew.

Dinner was no different. The following day, and every time we ate together, the same thing occurred. It was clear to me that no woman could survive on the crumbs she fed herself, and that something mysterious was at work. Dissimulation became my ruse. I pretended not to notice her conduct, in the hope that, with time, she might reconcile herself to life with me. But my hope was in vain, and I would soon be convinced of it.

One night, believing me asleep, Amina rose softly and dressed in silence, taking great care not to wake me. I could not imagine what had stirred her from her bed, and, curious to find out, I made a show of sinking further into sleep. She stole out of the room without a sound.

A moment later, I was up, robed, and at the window, in time to see her cross the courtyard, open the door, and disappear into the street.

I ran to the door, which she had left ajar, and followed her moonlit form to the cemetery. Hiding in the shadows, I saw my wife in the company of a female ghoul.[26]

I need hardly remind Your Majesty that ghouls are demons of either sex that roam the countryside at night. They make their home in ruins, and they like to throw themselves on passersby to kill them and feed on their flesh. When no one passes by, they go to the cemetery to dig up the dead and feast on their bodies instead.

I was filled with horror at the sight of my wife with the ghoul. They dug up a body that had not been buried longer than a day, and the ghoul hacked at its flesh, and they ate the hunks of meat together,[27] sitting on the edge of the pit. They appeared to keep up a perfectly calm conversation throughout their inhuman meal, but I was too far off to hear a word of their exchange, which must have been as strange as their food.[28] It chills me still to recall it.

When they had finished their horrible dinner, they flung the remains of the corpse into the grave and covered it with earth. I left them to it and hurried home, where I made sure to leave the door ajar as I had found it, climbed back into bed, and pretended once more to sleep.

Before long, Amina returned as soundlessly as she had left,[29] undressed, and slipped into bed, no doubt congratulating herself on having escaped my notice.

Haunted by the barbaric act I had just witnessed, and horrified to find myself in bed with the woman who had performed it, I struggled to find sleep, and when I did, it was so light that the first call to prayer was enough to wake me. I dressed and went to the mosque.

After prayers, I left the city and spent the day roaming the gardens, pondering how best to compel my wife to change her ways. I rejected all the violent measures[30] that suggested themselves to me, and I resolved to wean her off her terrible habit through gentleness alone. These thoughts escorted me all the way home, where I happened to arrive in time for dinner.

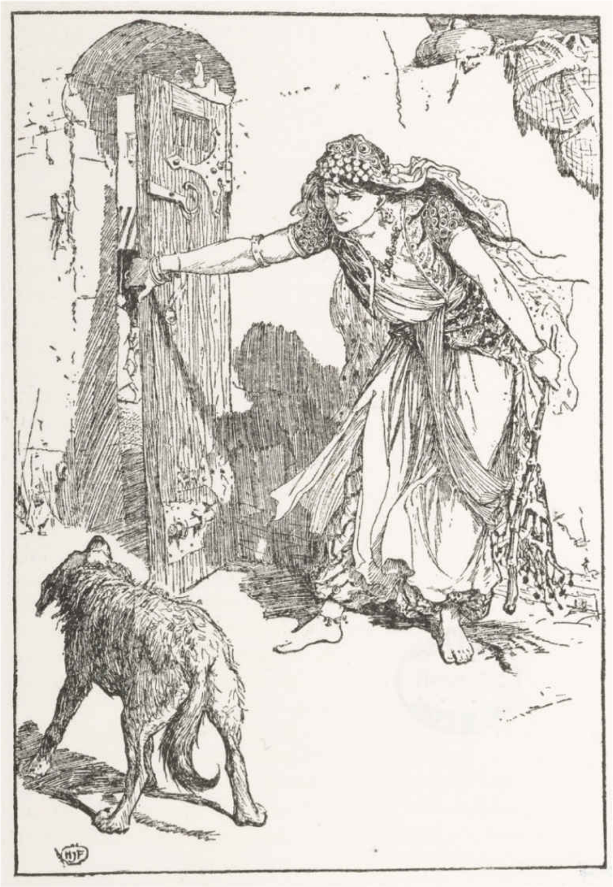
As soon as I appeared, Amina called for the meal to be served, and we took our places at the table. Since she persisted in picking at her rice, as gently as possible I said, “Amina, surely you remember my surprise when, the day after our wedding, you declined to eat anything but a few grains of rice, in such a way that any other husband would have been appalled. I did nothing but tell you how it saddened me and point out the variety of dishes before us in the hope of tempting your appetite. Since that day, our meals have changed, but your attitude remains the same. I have kept quiet until now, and I do not mean to upset you, but please tell me, Amina, do you really prefer the taste of dead flesh?”

Hardly were these words out when Amina, who understood that I had spied on her, was gripped by a dreadful fury. Her cheeks burned, her eyes bulged in their sockets, and she foamed at the mouth with rage.

I watched her in horror, unable to move, dreading to think what she was plotting against me. In the heat of her anger, she seized a jug that stood nearby and, plunging her hands inside, muttered a few strange words and flung its water at my face.[31]

“Creep!” she cried. “To punish you for prying, become a dog!”

As these words tumbled from her mouth, I suddenly knew two things: that Amina was a magician,[32] and that I was no longer a man.



"I was no longer a man." Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

I was too stunned by my brutal transformation to think of running away, and Amina took the opportunity to beat me with a stick, striking me so hard that it was sheer luck I escaped with my life. I tried to shake her off, but she hunted me into the courtyard[33] with the same mad fury, and no matter how nimbly I ran this way and that, I was not deft enough to evade her blows and had to suffer many more. At last, tired by the chase and desperate to finish me off once and for all, she pulled the door ajar so as to crush me with it when I tried to pass. Dog though I was, I saw through her malicious plan. The presence of danger quickened my mind, and I was able to time my movements so well that I caught her off guard and slipped out to freedom, unharmed except for a scrape on the tip of my tail.

It hurt, and I howled so noisily all along the streets that the other dogs came out and bit me. To avoid them, I took refuge in a butcher's shop, where sheep's heads, tongues, and trotters were sold.

My host came zealously to my defense, driving off the dogs that were at my heels while I crept into a corner out of sight. Yet his shop was not quite the haven I had hoped for. He was one of those fanatics who hold all dogs to be unclean,[34] and for whom all the soap and water in the world will not suffice if a dog happens to brush past them. Once my attackers had retreated, he tried to force me out as well, but I would not move from my corner, and I spent the night recovering from Amina's abuse.

I will not tire Your Majesty with the sad thoughts that gripped me in my new state. Allow me simply to skip to the following morning, when my host returned from the market laden with sheep's heads, tongues, and trotters, which he laid out for the day's trade. Stepping out from my hiding place, I noticed that the smell of meat had attracted a number of neighborhood dogs, which now arranged themselves outside the shop, waiting to be fed. I crept out and stood with them.

My host, knowing I had eaten nothing since the day before, made a point of throwing me bigger and better bits than those that fell to the other dogs. When he had finished, I begged to be allowed back in, but he was unmoved by my pleading looks and wagging tail, and he stood firmly at the door, holding a stick, until I was forced to retreat.

A few doors down, I came upon a bakery. Unlike the melancholy vendor of sheep's heads, the baker seemed a cheerful man who at that moment was having his breakfast. Though I gave no sign of hunger, he at once threw me a piece of bread. Instead of lunging at it in the manner of other dogs, I first bowed my head at him[35] and wagged my tail in thanks. He repaid the courtesy with a smile. I had no need to eat, but I took the piece of bread all the same and chewed it slowly, to show him I was doing it out of politeness. He noticed all this and seemed not to mind my presence at his shop. I sat still, facing the street, to prove that I only asked for his protection.

This he gave me, and he even stroked my back until I felt bold enough to step inside, though I made it clear that I was only entering with his permission. He welcomed me in and showed me a corner where I could sit out of his way. There I stayed throughout my time at the bakery, where I was treated with unfailing kindness, and my host never broke bread without sharing it with me. I thanked him with my devotion.[36]

My eyes never left him, and I shadowed his every step. He seemed to enjoy the attention, so I redoubled my efforts. Sometimes, leaving the house, he would cry out the name he had chosen for me: “Ginger!”

The sound of it made me leap. Out into the street I went, yapping and frisking in the doorway until he appeared. I would tag along on his errands, never more than a few steps ahead or behind, gazing up at him now and then to show my delight.

I had been living there for some time when a woman came in one day to buy bread. To pay for it, she handed over a false coin mixed in among the good ones. The baker perceived this, gave it back, and asked for another in its place.

The woman refused, insisting it was genuine, but the baker held his ground.

“This coin is so clearly fake,” he said at last, “that even my dog would not be fooled. Ginger!”

I hopped onto the counter, and the baker laid out the change.

“See if you can find the bad coin.”

I inspected each in turn, and, setting my paw down on the false one, looked up at my master in triumph.

The baker, who had only been joking, was startled by my ability, and the woman was forced to admit defeat and produce another coin in its place. As soon as she was gone, my master called his neighbors and told them, with many embellishments, what I had done.

The skeptical neighbors set many coins before me, but without fail my paw came down on the false ones and set them apart from the others.

The woman, meanwhile, told everyone she met about our encounter. My skill for sniffing out false money became the talk of the neighborhood. Soon it had spread through the town.

My days were busy. All those who bought bread from my master asked for proof of my gift. People came from the farthest quarters of the city just to see me perform. My fame drew such crowds that the baker struggled to meet demand. He told his friends that I was worth my weight in gold.

Admiration was soon followed by envy.[37] Traps were laid to abduct me, and the baker never dared let me out of his sight. One day, a woman came in, like the rest, to ask for bread. My bed was now up on the counter. She threw down six coins, one of which was false. I picked it out at once, trapping it under my paw and cocking my head as if to ask whether I was mistaken.

“That’s right,” said the woman. “That’s the one.”

She stood there holding my gaze for a long time, then paid for her bread. As she stepped out, she motioned for me to follow.

Half my thoughts were always turned to some means of escape from my strange condition. The woman’s insistent look had struck me. I guessed that she might have divined something of my misfortune, and in this I was proven right. But I held back at first, watching her. She turned and, seeing that I had not moved, beckoned to me once more.

I resolved to go. The baker was busy with his oven and paid me no attention. I crept out after the woman and trailed her home.

“Come in,” she said, holding open the door. “You will not be sorry that you followed me.”

Once we had entered, she locked the door and led me into a room, where a beautiful young woman was working at a piece of embroidery. She was the daughter of the kind woman who had brought me here,[38] and, as I was soon to learn, was highly skilled in the art of magic.

“My daughter,” said the woman, “I have brought you the baker’s dog, whose tricks are on everyone’s lips. You remember that when I first heard of him, I wondered whether he was really a man that some evil force had turned into a dog. Today I went to buy bread and saw for myself the truth of the story, and I was able to persuade the most-talked-about dog in Baghdad to follow me home. What do you think?”

“Your guess was right, Mother. Let me show you.”

She rose and reached for a jug, dipped a hand in it, and sprinkled my face with its water.[39]

“If you were born a dog,” she said, “remain a dog. But if you were born a man, let this water restore your human form.”

The spell was broken at once. The dog vanished and I stood before her as a man.

Overcome with joy, I threw myself at the young woman’s feet and kissed the hem of her dress.

“My savior!” I said. “I cannot thank you enough except to give myself to you to deal with as you wish. I am yours.”

I told her my whole story (my long-suffering marriage with Amina, her strange moods and manners, her incredible act of aggression) and thanked her mother once more for the happiness she had brought me.

“Sidi Numan,” replied the daughter, “say no more of your gratitude. The knowledge that we have been of service to a gentleman like you is recompense enough. Let us speak of Amina, your wife, whom I happened to know before your marriage. We studied the art of magic under the same mistress. We even met going to the same baths, but we never got along, and we were careful to avoid each other’s company. Her mean-spirited curse does not surprise me. But my antidote is not complete. It is not enough to have reversed the spell; she must also be punished for her malice, and you must reclaim your authority.[40] Stay here with my mother one moment.”

As she disappeared behind a door, I took the chance to heap thanks on her mother once again.

“As you can see,” she said, “my daughter is as gifted a magician as Amina herself, but she uses her talent to help others.[41] That is why I let her do it. If I thought she was abusing her power, I would have put a stop to it long ago.”

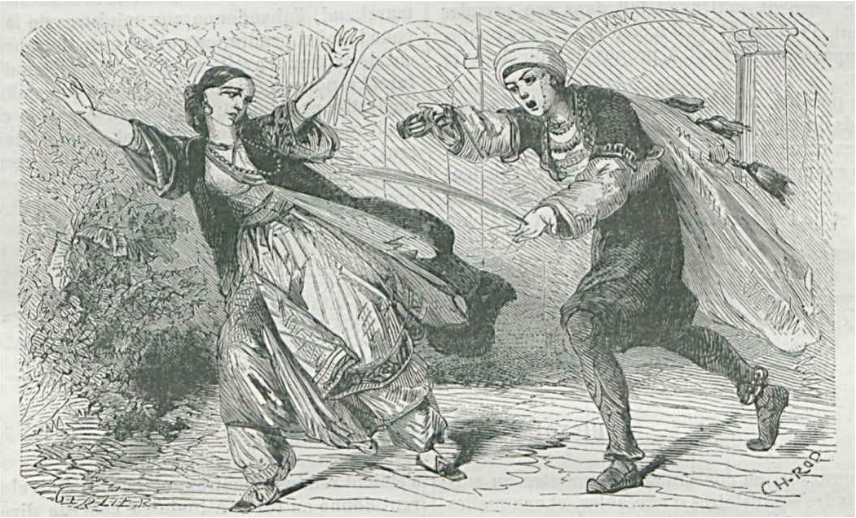
The mother had just launched into an account of one of the marvelous deeds she had witnessed when her daughter returned, holding a small vial.

“Sidi Numan,” she said, “my books tell me[42] that Amina is not home at present but is due to return at any moment. I have also learned that she makes a great show of worrying about your absence in front of the servants. She has been telling people that, while at dinner with her, you suddenly remembered some important business that required you to leave at once, and that a dog had strayed in through the open door, and it had had to be chased out with a stick. Go home, then, without delay, and take this vial. Amina won't be long. As soon as she enters, go down to meet her in the courtyard. She will try to run away, so be quick. Throw this water over her[43] and say, 'Be punished for your crimes!' You shall see what happens next."

My ears rang with her words as I sped home, after having sworn my eternal gratitude once more. Everything happened exactly as the young magician had predicted. Amina arrived home before long and I went down to meet her, vial in hand. She gave a shriek and was already turning on her heels when I flung the water at her face and spoke the magic words. Amina disappeared, and in her place stood the horse Your Majesty saw yesterday.

I seized her at once by the mane and dragged her to the stables, where I slipped a halter around her neck[44] and tied her up. There I cursed her for her cruelty and whipped her until my strength gave up. But I took up the whip again the next day, and every day after that.

I hope, Commander of the Faithful,[45] you will not take exception to my conduct, and will not think this wicked woman more harshly treated than she deserves.



"I flung the water at her face and spoke the magic words." Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

* * *

“Sidi Numan,” replied the caliph, “your story is a strange one, and there are no excuses for your wife. Though I do not wholly condemn your treatment of her,[46] I wish you would consider how painful it is to be changed to an animal, and let that punishment be enough. I am tempted to have you ask the young witch to reverse the spell and change your wife back to her human form, but I know that witches can be cruel and stubborn, and I fear that she would inflict on you a harder fate than you have had before.”

Then the caliph, gentle and full of pity for those who suffer, turned to the third man his vizier had brought before him.

“Khawaja Hasan,” he said, “as I passed yesterday before your house and found it splendid, I wished to know who owned it. I learned that you had built it, though your profession scarcely earned you enough to live. I was also told that you made good use of the fortune God had given you, and that you were beloved by your neighbors. All this pleased me, and persuaded me that fate has blessed you with this wealth in some unusual way. Open your heart and tell me all, so that I may take pleasure in your happiness with greater understanding. You have my assurance that your property is safe.”

At these calming words, Khawaja Hasan threw himself down before the throne, touched his forehead to the ground, and rose to face the caliph.

“Anyone but me,” he said, “might have been troubled to receive an order to appear before Your Majesty. But since I have only ever borne you deep respect, and have never done a thing to break the law, my only fear was that the splendor of your throne would stun me into silence. Still, having heard how kindly Your Majesty receives and listens to your subjects, I had no doubt that in your presence I would have the courage and the confidence to give you what you seek. You have been good enough to give me your protection, and I hope you will not change your mind when you have heard my story.”

Then Khawaja Hasan began his tale.

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE TALE OF KHAWAJA HASAN AL-HABBAL[47]

“COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL,” he said, “to account for the great happiness I now enjoy, I must first tell you about two dear friends, citizens of Baghdad, who are alive and can bear witness to the truth of my story. These two friends are named Saadi and Saad.

Saadi, who is extremely rich, has always been of the opinion that no man can be happy on this earth without the wealth to live free of dependence.

Saad is of another view. He agrees that money is needed to live, but he maintains that happiness lies in virtue[48] and that worldly things must be sought in proportion and put to good use. Saad himself is of this number and lives very happily, content with his station. Though Saadi is infinitely richer, their friendship is sincere, and the richer man values himself no more than the poorer. Their only difference is on this point; in all other things, they have always been close.

One day, as they were on this subject, as they have since told me themselves, Saadi claimed that the poor were only poor because they were born in poverty. Or, if they were born rich, because they had lost their money to dissipation or bad luck.

“The poor are poor,” he said, “because they lack a starting sum of money they might increase with work. If they had such a sum, and used it well, over time they would become rich.”

Saad disagreed. “The means you propose,” he said, “to make a poor man rich is not so certain as you think. I believe a man may become rich by other means than money: More fortunes have been raised on sheer good luck[49] than on capital, however well managed.”

“We shall not settle anything,” said Saadi, “by opposing my view to yours. I will prove mine by testing it, that is to say, by giving a sum of money to one of those craftsmen whose poverty passes from father to son, who live from hand to mouth and die as badly off as they were born. If I am not successful, let us see if you are proven right.”

Some days after this dispute, the two friends happened to walk through the part of town where I worked as a ropemaker, a trade I had learned from my father, who had learned it from his, and his from his own. By my clothes and tools, it was easy to guess at my need.

Saad, who remembered Saadi’s promise, said, “Here is a man who has worked at this trade for some time, and in the same poverty. He is a worthy subject on which to test your notion.”

“I happen to have on my person,” said Saadi, “enough to make the experiment, and I have been waiting for the occasion to perform it in your presence.”

The two friends came up to me and I put down my work. Each man greeted me and wished me peace, then Saadi asked my name.

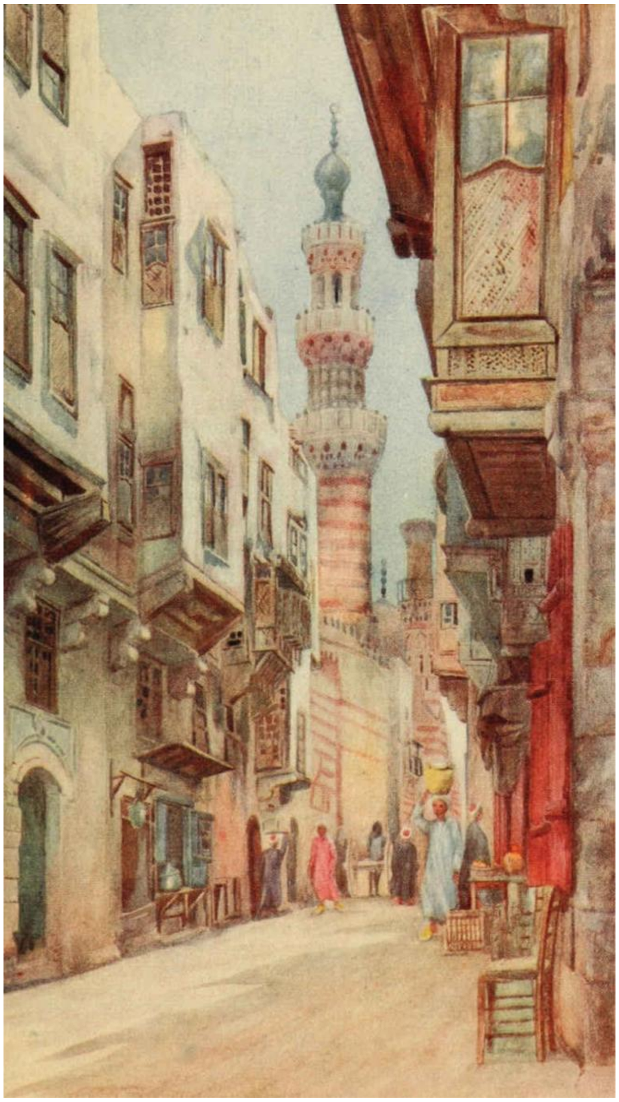
“My name is Hasan,” I said, “and because of my trade I am known as Hasan al-Habbal.”

“Hasan,” said Saadi, “as there is no trade that does not feed its master, I have no doubt that yours lets you live well, and I am amazed that in such a long time at your trade, you have not saved enough to buy a good stock of hemp and put more hands to work.”

“You will be less amazed by how little I have saved,” I said, “when you learn that all my labor from morning to night is hardly enough to keep my family in bread. I have a wife and five children, none old enough to help me, and I must feed and clothe them[50] and provide a thousand other necessary things. While hemp does not cost much, it costs something, and any profit I make I have to spend on renewing my stock, or my family would starve. Judge for yourself if it is possible that I should save anything. We are content, at least, to have been spared the knowledge and desire of what we lack.”

“I understand,” said Saadi, “why you must content yourself with what you have. But if I were to give you a purse of two hundred gold coins, would you not make good use of it, and do you not believe that with this sum you would become at least as rich as the masters of your trade?”

“You seem honest enough,” I said, “to persuade me your offer is not made in jest. I daresay that a much smaller sum would be sufficient to raise me above all the tradesmen of Baghdad combined.”



The lives of modest merchants and craftsmen are highlighted in tales such as that of Hasan al-Habbal. Illustration of Cairo street by W. S. S. Tyrwhitt from Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus *(1912).*

The generous Saadi showed me straightaway that he was serious. He slipped the purse into my hand and said, “Here are two hundred gold coins: I have counted them well. God bless you with them and give you the grace of putting them to good use. My friend and I will take great pleasure in the knowledge that they have made you happier.”

When I had the purse, Commander of the Faithful, and tucked it away, I was in such a daze of joy that words deserted me, and all I could do to thank my benefactor was to catch the hem of his cloak and kiss it, but he withdrew and went on his way with his friend.

When they were gone, I searched my mind for a place to keep the purse. My little house had neither safe nor cupboard, nor anywhere it would not be discovered. As it was my custom,[51] and that of many poor, to hide what money I had in the folds of my turban, I left work and went home on the pretext of fixing it. Careful not to draw the attention of my wife and children, I put aside ten gold coins for present needs and wrapped the rest in the fabric.

My first expense that day was to buy a good stock of hemp. Then, as we had eaten no meat for a long time, I went to the butcher’s and bought some for supper.

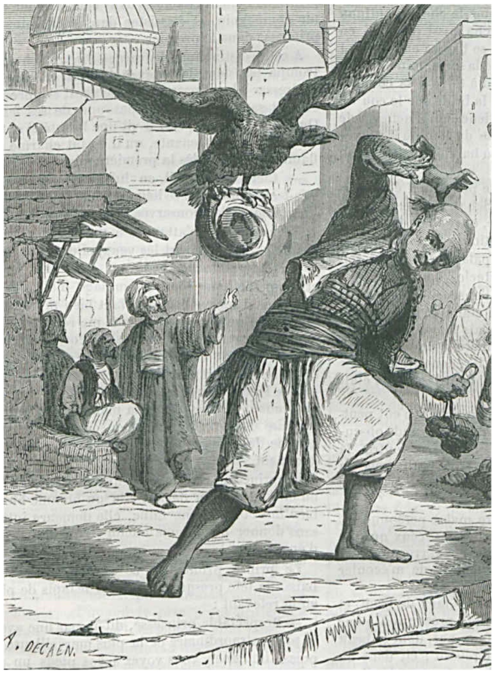
As I carried the meat home, a starving kite swooped down on me and would have snatched it away had I not held tight, but alas! It would have been better to let it go than lose my purse. The more I clung to the meat, the harder the bird fought, dragging me this way and that until, upset in the struggle, my turban fell to earth.

The kite let go of the meat, threw itself on the turban, and carried it away. I let out a howl that terrified my neighbors. They joined their cries to mine to make the kite give up its prize, but we made no impression on the bird, which carried my turban away, out of sight.

I went home very sad at the loss of my turban and its treasure. I would need a new one, another dent in the ten gold coins I had set aside and already dipped into for hemp, and my great hopes dwindled. Most painful to me was the thought of my benefactor learning his gift had been squandered and finding my story too wild to believe.

While the ten gold coins lasted, my little family and I were better for it, but I soon fell into the same poverty as before. Still, I did not complain.

“God has tested me,”[52] I thought, “by giving me riches when I least expected them and taking them away when it pleased Him, but I will praise Him all the same and submit to His will.”



The kite threw itself on the turban and carried it away. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

About six months after my struggle with the kite, the two friends happened to pass through my part of town, and Saad was reminded of me.

“We are not far,” he said to Saadi, “from Hasan al-Habbal. Let us go and see what he has made of the two hundred coins you gave him.”

“You will find him very changed,” said Saadi, “and I expect we will hardly recognize him.”

When they turned the corner of my street, Saad, who saw me first, said to his friend, “It seems you spoke too soon: I see Hasan al-Habbal, but no change in his person. He is as poorly dressed as he was when we met him. The only difference is that his turban looks a little cleaner. See for yourself whether I am mistaken.”

Saadi drew closer and saw that his friend was right, but he did not know how to account for the little change he saw.

“It hurts me,” I said when they were close, “to have to tell you that your hopes and mine have not come true.”

I related what happened, but Saad scoffed at my story.

“Why would a hungry kite attack a turban?” he said. “You have done what people of your kind always do. If they have made a gain, or some good fortune comes their way, they forget their work and make merry as long as the money lasts, and when they have eaten it all, they are reduced to the same hardship as before. You are poor because you deserve it,[53] and you have shown yourself unworthy of the good that comes your way.”

“I bear all your reproaches,” I replied, “and will bear many more even harsher, but I do not deserve them. The thing is publicly known in this part of town, and you will have no trouble finding witnesses. I confess I never heard of kites stealing turbans, but it is a thing that happened to me, just as a great many other incredible things happen every day.”

Saad took my side and told Saadi many other surprising stories of kites, until at last he pulled his purse out of his cloak. Into my hand he counted out two hundred gold coins, which I tucked into the folds of my cloak for lack of a purse.

“I will make you another gift,” said Saadi, “but you must keep it in a safer place.”

I told Saadi how grateful I was for his second kindness and how little I deserved it, and before I could say another word, he turned and left with his friend. As soon as they were gone, I abandoned my work and went home and, finding the house empty, I set aside ten gold coins and wrapped the rest in a cloth, which I buried in a large clay pot full of bran. My wife came home soon after, and as I had only a little hemp left, I went out to buy some.

While I was out, a street vendor happened to pass our house peddling sand, the kind women use at the baths. My wife had run out of it, but she had no money, so she asked the seller if he would exchange the sand for some bran. He agreed, she got the sand, and the seller carried off the pot containing the bran.

I came home with as much hemp as I could carry, followed by five porters, their hands as full as mine. When I had satisfied the porters for their trouble and sat down to rest, I found I could not see the pot of bran.

It is impossible to express my surprise at that moment, and the effect it had on me. I pressed my wife to tell me what had become of it, and she told me the bargain she had struck,[54] believing it to be a good one.

"Unlucky woman!" I cried, "You don't know the harm you have done. …"

When I told her what she had lost to the sand peddler, my wife nearly went mad, beating her chest and tearing at her hair and clothes.

"Am I fit to live," she said, "after such a mistake? Where shall I find that sand peddler? I have never seen him in my life and shall perhaps never see him again. You were quite wrong to keep from me a matter so important. This would not have happened had you told me your secret."

I shall never finish this story if I related to Your Majesty everything she said out of grief, for women are often eloquent in anguish.[55]

"Calm yourself," I said, "or your cries will attract the neighbors, who will only laugh at us. We had better conceal our loss and bear it patiently, and praise God that the ten coins we were left have brought us some relief."

My wife found these reasons hard to stomach, but as time softens even the hardest blows, at last she found ease.

"It is true," I said, "we live in poverty, but what do the rich have over us? Do we not breathe the same air, enjoy the same light and heat? What is their advantage, if they die as we do?"

My wife and I consoled ourselves with these reflections and I kept up my work as free of care as I had been before my losses. My only concern was about how I could look Saadi in the eye when he came to find out how my fortunes had improved thanks to his money.

The two friends took longer to return than the first time. Saad often mentioned it to Saadi, but Saadi always deferred.

"The longer we wait," he would say, "the richer Hasan will be, and the proof will be stronger."

"I would not count on it too much," said Saad, "for fear it should prove otherwise."

"Hasan was unlucky once," said Saadi, "and will have been more cautious this time."

"There are other accidents," said Saad, "that neither you nor I can imagine, so moderate your joy. I predict you will be frustrated, and I shall have better success in proving that a man may become rich by any other means than money.”

One day, when Saad and Saadi had disagreed at length on the same subject, they resolved to take a walk and find out which of them had lost the bet. I saw them coming, and, in my shame, I thought to run away and hide. Instead, I fixed my eyes on my work until they were at my stall and wishing peace upon me, and I had to look up. I told them every detail of my last misfortune, on account of which I was as poor as ever.

“You might say,” I concluded, “that I should not have hidden the coins in a pot of bran that would be taken from the house, but the pot had stood there for years and had never been removed. Could I have guessed that a vendor would come by that very day and that my wife, having no money, would exchange the pot for his sand? You might say I should have warned my wife, but I do not believe that men as wise as you would have advised it. As for where I hid the money, how could I be sure it would have been safer elsewhere? It is God’s will that I should not be enriched by your charity, but that I should be poor. My debt to you, however, is the same as if it had succeeded.”

“Though I like to believe,” said Saadi, “that your story is true, and not an excuse for your dissipation, I would not ruin myself by seeking to test it. I do not regret the four hundred gold coins I parted with to save you from poverty. I gave them away under the eyes of God, expecting no reward but the pleasure of doing good. If anything makes me sorry, it is that I did not offer my assistance to another who might have made better use of it.”

He turned to his friend.

“Though I do not concede defeat,” he said to Saad, “you are free to put your own notion to the test and show me there are ways to make a poor man’s fortune beside money. Look no further than Hasan, though I doubt that whatever you give him will serve him better than four hundred gold coins.”

Saad had in his hand a piece of lead,[56] which he showed to Saadi.

“You saw me pick this up from the ground. I shall give it to Hasan, and you will see what he makes of it.”

Saadi gave a shout of laughter.

“A piece of lead! Worth a penny at most. What good is a penny to Hasan?”

“Let him laugh,” said Saad, handing me the lead. “You shall tell us soon enough how happy it has made you.”

I thought this was a joke at my expense, but I took the lead all the same. The two friends left me to finish their walk, and I went back to my work.

In the evening, as I took off my belt before bed, the piece of lead fell to the ground, and I picked it up and laid it in the first place I found.

That night, it happened that one of my neighbors, a fisherman, was mending his nets and found he was missing a stretch of lead. It was too late to buy any, and his family would go hungry the next day without it, so he sent his wife to ask for some among the neighbors.

The woman went from door to door on both sides of the street and came back empty-handed. Her husband asked whether she had tried this neighbor or that one. She had, she said. “And what about Hasan al-Habbal?”

“He lives so far away,” said his wife, “and never has anything anyone needs.”

“No matter,” said the fisherman. “You must try him.”

The fisherman’s wife, having grumbled all the way, knocked at my door and woke me.

“Hasan al-Habbal,” she said, “my husband needs a bit of lead to mend his nets. If you happen to have any, please give it to him.”

My mind rushed to the piece of lead that Saad had given me, and I told my wife to give it to the neighbor, who was so pleased that her journey had not been in vain that she promised us the first haul of her husband’s nets.

The fisherman, having mended his nets, went fishing two hours before dawn, as was his custom. At the first cast, he caught only one fish, a yard long and thick in proportion. After that, he caught many more fish, but none of them were as big as the first.

At home, the fisherman remembered his wife’s promise to me, and I was extremely surprised to see him turn up at my work with a large fish.

“In thanks for your favor,” he said, “I bring you the fish I caught on my first throw. Had it pleased God to fill my nets with fish, they would all have been yours. Please accept this one, small as it is.”

Though the piece of lead was not worth my neighbor's gift, I knew I would anger him if I refused it, so I thanked him and took the fish home to my wife.

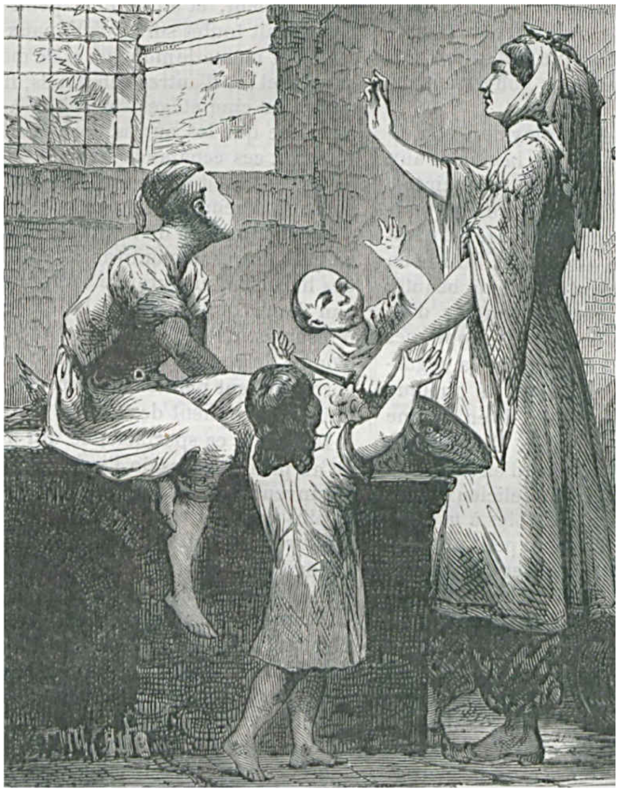
"I believe this is all we can expect," I said, "from the present Saad gave me yesterday."

My wife was alarmed to see such a large fish.

"What shall we do with it?" she said. "It will not fit in our pan, and our pot is not big enough to boil it."

"That is your business," I said. "Cook it as you wish. I would be happy either way."

While preparing the fish, my wife found in its guts a large diamond,[57] which she washed and took to be glass. She had heard talk of diamonds but had never seen one, and she gave it to our children as a toy.



"My wife found in its guts a large diamond." Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

At night, when the lamp was lit and the children were playing with the diamond, they noticed that it sparkled whenever my wife, who was busy making supper, stood before the light, and they snatched it from each other to see. The young ones began to cry when the older ones would not let them play with it as long as they liked, but as children quarrel for the slightest thing, neither I nor my wife paid any attention to the cause of their clamor, which died down when the food was served.

After supper, when the children came together to make the same racket, I asked the eldest for the source of their excitement.

"It is a piece of glass," he said, "which shines when our backs are turned to the light."

I tried the experiment myself and was so taken with its effect that I asked my wife what it was. She said it was a piece of glass she had found while gutting the fish.

I knew no more than she did, but I took the experiment further by asking my wife to hide the lamp in the chimney. We found that the glass produced a light so great[58] that it was bright enough to see our way to bed. I put out the lamp and laid the piece of glass on the chimney to light us.

"Look," I said, "Saad's piece of lead has spared us the expense of oil."

When my children saw the glass shine as brightly as the lamp, they gave a howl of joy loud enough to wake the neighborhood, and it was only by shouting louder that my wife and I were able to calm them.

In the morning, I went to work as usual without another thought for the glass, for it is no surprise that a man like me, who had never seen a diamond, should be unaware of its value.

Now I must tell Your Majesty that between my house and the next was only a thin partition. My neighbor was a wealthy Jewish man, a jeweler by trade,[59] and the room where he slept with his wife bordered our common wall. They had been awakened by my children's commotion, and the next day, the jeweler’s wife came to complain to mine about the disturbance that had broken their first sleep.

“Dear Rachel,” said my wife, “I am sorry and hope you can excuse us. It was the children. You know it takes so little to make them laugh or cry. Come in, and I will show you what set them off.”

The jeweler’s wife entered, and my wife took the diamond from the chimney.

“See,” she said, “it was this piece of glass that caused the noise.”

And she told Rachel, who knew about jewels, how she had found it in the belly of the fish.

“Aisha,” said Rachel to my wife, “I believe it is no more than glass, but as it is more beautiful than common glass, and since I have another piece at home I like to wear, I will buy it from you if you like.”

My children, who heard talk of selling their toy, begged their mother not to part with it. To keep them calm, she promised.

Forced to withdraw, Rachel whispered to my wife that if she had a mind to sell the diamond, not to offer it to anyone else.

Then she ran to her husband, who was at work in the jewelers’ quarter, and told him the discovery she had made. She gave him an account of the diamond’s size and weight, its beauty and shine, and its property of sparkling in the dark.

The jeweler sent his wife back to mine with orders to offer her a small price, and to raise it by degrees until she accepted. Rachel returned to my wife and asked to buy the diamond for twenty gold coins. My wife, finding the sum considerable for a piece of glass, said she would not part with it until she had consulted me.

On my return from work, I found them speaking at the door. When I heard what our neighbor offered for the glass, I was slow to respond, as I remembered Saad’s promise that his piece of lead would make my fortune.

The jeweler’s wife, thinking the low price was the reason for my silence, raised it to fifty. As she was so quick to double her offer, I told her I expected a great deal more.

“Let us make it a hundred,” she said, “though I am not sure if my husband will agree.”

At this new price, I told her that I wanted a hundred thousand, even though I knew the glass was worth more, but that, as her neighbor, I would be content with this sum, and I would take it to another jeweler if she refused.

Rachel confirmed my guess by raising her price to fifty thousand coins, which I refused.

“I cannot offer more,” she said, “without my husband’s consent. He will be home at night. All I ask is that you let him see it.”

I agreed, and the following night the jeweler came and asked to see the glass. As it was dark and the lamp not yet lighted, he knew at once by the diamond’s glow in my hand that his wife had told the truth.

“Well, neighbor,” he said after admiring it a long time, “my wife tells me she has offered you fifty thousand coins, and I am prepared to give you twenty thousand more.”

“Your wife may also have mentioned,” I said, “that I value my diamond at one hundred thousand coins and will not part with it for less.”

He haggled a long time[60] in the hope I would come down, but I stood firm, and for fear I would find another jeweler, he was forced to agree to my price. He told me he lacked the full sum but would pay it all by that time tomorrow, and the same day he brought two bags of a thousand coins to settle the bargain. The next day, he brought me a hundred thousand coins (whether he borrowed them or teamed up with other jewelers, I could not say), and I gave him the diamond.

Rich beyond my hopes, I thanked God for His grace and would have gone to throw myself at Saad’s feet had I known where he lived. My mind now turned to the use I should make of my wealth. My wife, with the vanity natural to her sex,[61] proposed to buy fine clothes for herself and the children, and a finely furnished house. I told her that while money was made to be spent, it would be more prudent to start by setting down a good foundation, and the rest would come later.

I spent the next day visiting people of my trade, who were as poor as I had been, and recruiting them to work for me, with the promise to pay them as soon as their work was done. Since that day, all the ropemakers in Baghdad are in my employ, and I have kept my promise to them.

To hold all the workmen and their goods, I rented warehouses in different parts of town, and in each I appointed a clerk to sell both wholesale and retail. In this way, I made a considerable profit. And to hold all the warehouses in one place, I bought a large house in disrepair that stood on a vast stretch of land, pulled it down, and built the building Your Majesty saw yesterday. Grand as it may seem, it consists only of warehouses for my business and rooms to house my family.

It was some time after I had left my poor little house for this new one when Saad and Saadi, who had almost forgotten me, came past my street on their walk, and they were very amazed not to find me there at my trade. They asked what had become of me and whether I was alive or dead. Their amazement increased when they learned I had become a great merchant and was no longer known as plain Hasan but as Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal—that is to say, Merchant Hasan the Ropemaker—and that I had built a house like a palace.

The two friends came to find me, and on the way, as Saadi could not imagine that the piece of lead might be behind my wealth, he said to Saad, “Delighted as I am to have made Hasan’s fortune, I cannot forgive the lies he told me to get four hundred coins instead of two.”

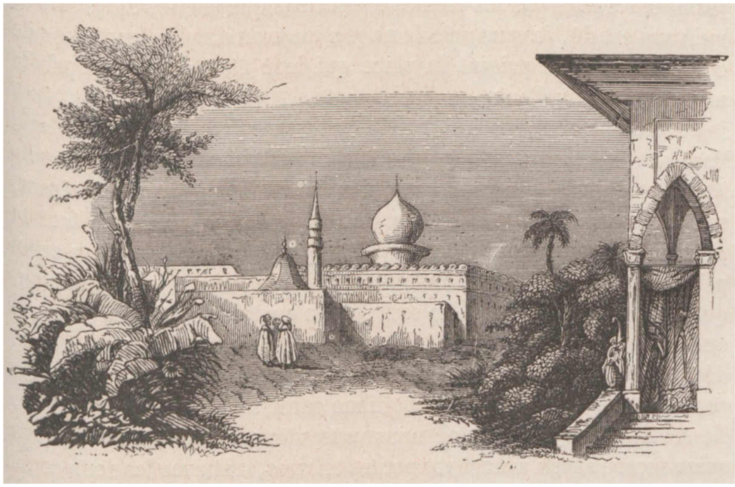
“I don’t see why,” said Saad, “you would do Khawaja Hasan the injustice of calling him a liar. I believe he told us the truth, and that it was the piece of lead I gave him that made his fortune. He will tell us so himself in a moment.”

The friends, having found the house, hardly believed it was mine. When they knocked at the door, and my porter opened it, Saadi said, “We were told this was Khawaja Hasan’s house, but we must be mistaken.”

“On the contrary,” said the porter, “you have come to the right place. One of the slaves will show you in.”

As soon as I saw the two friends, I rose and ran to them, and when we had embraced and they joined me on the sofa, I said I was still Hasan al-Habbal and had not forgotten my debt to them. Saadi spoke first.

“I am overjoyed,” he said, “to see you raised to the state I had in mind when I made you my gift of two hundred gold coins, the first time and the second. What I cannot grasp is why you saw fit to deceive us.”



My friends hardly believed the house was mine. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

As his friend spoke, Saad lowered his eyes and shook his head to show his indignation and assure me he believed my story. I told them the truth of my adventures in detail, but my account had no effect on Saadi’s disbelief.

“The story of the diamond in the belly of the fish,” he said, “appears to me as wild as the kite who stole the turban, and the exchange of sand. Still, I am convinced you are no longer poor but rich as I intended, and I can only be glad.”

As it was late, they rose to take their leave.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “I beg of you one favor: Do me the honor of joining me for supper and staying the night. Tomorrow we will go to a country house I bought to take the air, and we will return the same day on my horses.”

They agreed, and when supper was served, I led them into another hall, bright and clean, where they were served many fine dishes to their taste. I also treated them to a concert of voices and instruments, followed by dancers and other entertainments, to show them my thanks.

In the morning, we went to the river before sunrise, boarded a boat decked with carpets, and let six oarsmen and the stream bear us to the country house. When we came ashore, the two friends stopped to admire the views, neither too wide nor too close, and after I had shown them the house, we went into the garden.

What enchanted them most[62] was a grove of orange and lemon trees, heavy with flowers and fruit and sweet with scent, which were planted at equal distance and watered by a stream cut from the nearby river. The cool shade, the soft murmur of the water, and the clear song of countless birds pleased them so much that they stopped at every step to express their delight.

At the end of that grove, I led them into a forest of tall trees and showed them into a pavilion open on all sides and shaded by palms, where I invited them to rest on a sofa piled with cushions.

Two of my sons, who had come out for fresh air with their tutor, were searching for nests in the woods. When they spotted one in the branches of a great tree, they had the slave who waited on them climb the tree. The slave went up and, when he reached the nest, was amazed to find a turban, and he brought it down for the children.

“Father,” said my eldest, “look at this turban!”

The two friends were surprised by the novelty, and I even more so when I recognized my own turban, which the kite had carried away. It was clear from its condition that it had been sitting in the tree since the day I lost it. I unwrapped the cloth around the cap, pulled out Saadi’s purse, and emptied it before them.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “there is your money.”

Saadi counted out one hundred ninety coins.

“I concede,” he said, “that this money did not help you make your fortune, but I cannot be sure about the second sum.”

“I have told you the truth about both sums,” I said.

“Leave Saadi to his own opinions,” said Saad. “I will let him believe that the second sum he gave you made half your fortune, if he will agree that the other half grew from my piece of lead.”

Lunch put an end to their dispute, and after we had eaten, I left my guests to rest while I gave orders to my housekeeper and gardener. A little later, I joined them again and we talked until it grew a little cooler, so we returned to the garden for air and stayed there until sunset. Then we got on our horses and, followed by a slave, rode back to Baghdad by the light of the moon.

By some negligence of my servants, we had run out of barley for the horses. The storehouses were shut, but by searching the neighborhood, my slave came upon a pot of bran in a shop. He bought the bran, emptied it into the manger, and as he spread it out, he felt a heavy knot of cloth. He brought me the cloth as he found it, saying it was perhaps the one he had often heard me speak of to my friends. I ran to my benefactors.

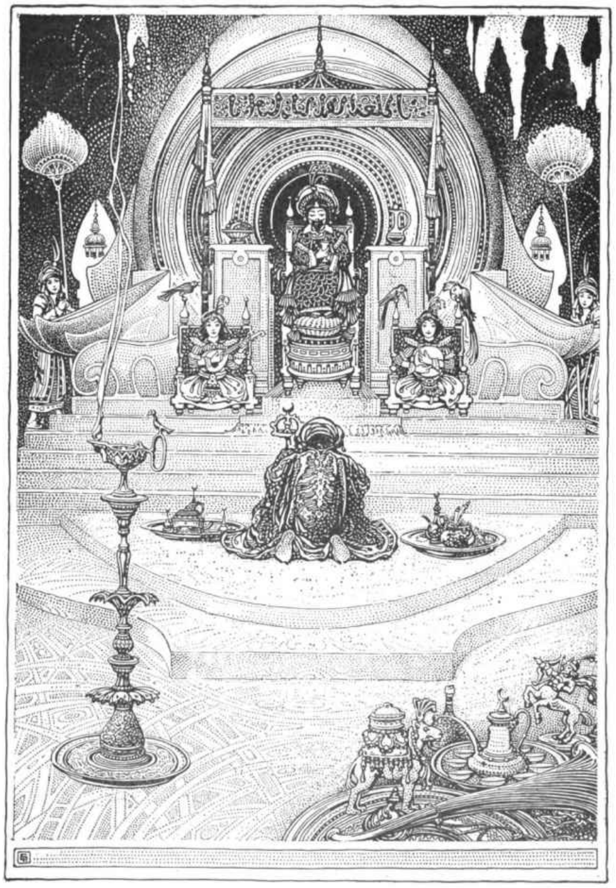
“Gentlemen,” I said in my excitement, “it has pleased God that you should not part from me before you see the proof of my adventure. Here is the rest of the money you gave me.”

I unwrapped the cloth and counted the coins before them. Saadi gladly submitted, renounced his disbelief, and said to Saad, “You were right: Money is not always the surest means of making money.”

“If you approve,” I said, “tomorrow I will give this money to the poor, in order that God may bless us all.”

The two friends stayed with me that night, and the next day they went back to their own homes, pleased that I did not misuse the riches I had been given. Since that day, I have gone to thank them in their own homes, and I consider it an honor to call them my friends.”

* * *



Caliph Harun al-Rashid was sitting upon his throne. Illustration by Eric Pape from The Arabian Nights: Tales of Wonder and Magnificence *(1923).*

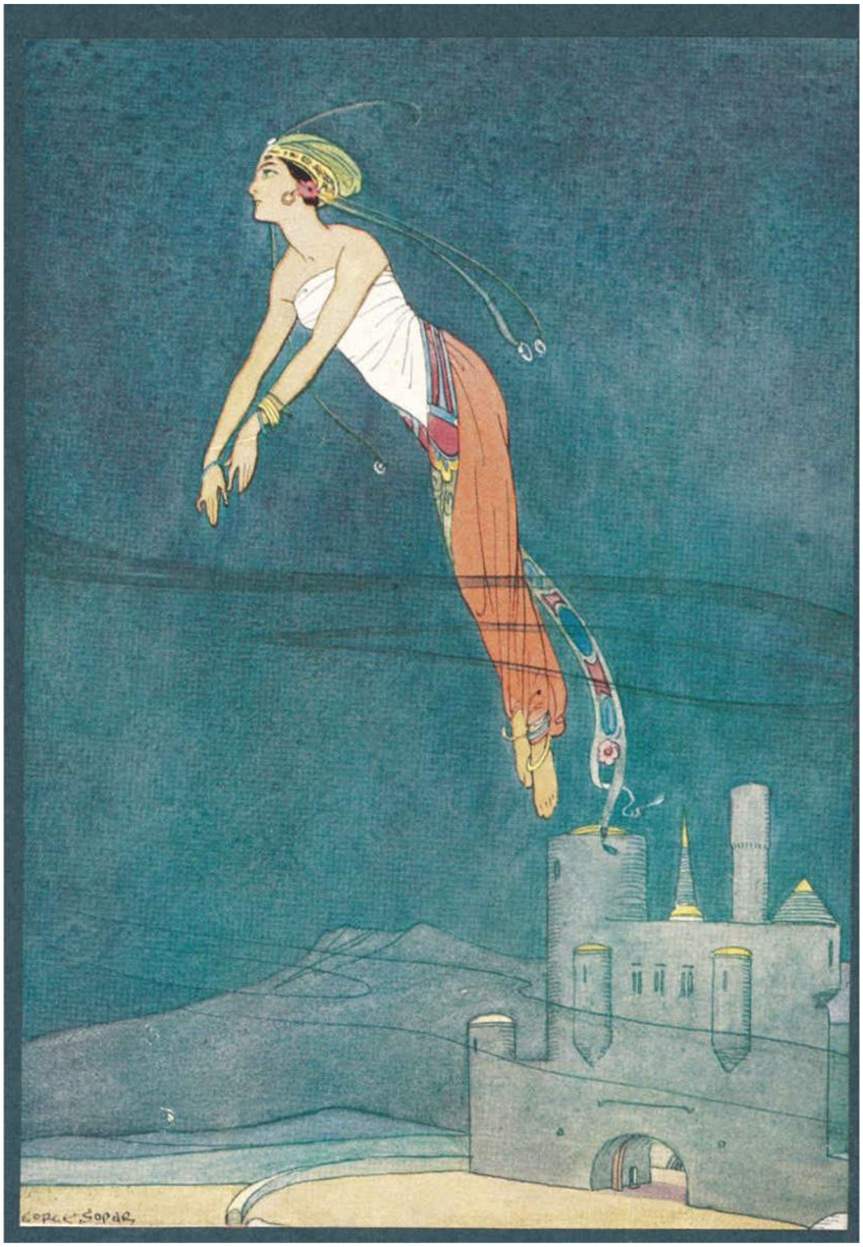
CALIPH HARUN AL-RASHID, absorbed in Khawaja Hasan's tale, only spoke some time after it ended.

"Nothing in a long time," he said, "has brought me such delight as to see the wonderful ways by which God has made you happy on this earth. You must continue to show your gratitude by putting your wealth to good use. I am glad to tell you that the diamond that made your fortune is now in my treasury, and gladder still to know how it got there. But because there may remain some doubt in Saadi's mind about the diamond, which I hold to be the rarest and most precious thing I own,[63] I want you to bring him here to see it, as proof that money is not the surest means to make a poor man rich. As for your story, I would like you to tell it to the keeper of my treasure, who will write it down and keep it with the diamond."

At these words, the caliph showed, with a nod of his head to Khawaja Hasan, Sidi Numan, and Baba Abdallah, that he was satisfied, and they took their leave from him and went on their way.

* * *

SHAHRAZAD would have begun another story, but the sultan, who saw the dawn appear, put her off to the evening.



The Fairy Pari Banu. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

1. Also see notes from Hanna Diyab’s original version of this story cycle in Part III.

2. *Sometimes, as Your Majesty may know from experience:* Galland integrates the stories that he has heard from Hanna Diyab into *Les mille et une nuits* by making reference to the frame story of Shahriyar and Shahrazad. The pointed reference to the dark mood of Caliph Harun al-Rashid invites Shahriyar to acknowledge his own suffering and break out of his obsessive fixation on his own betrayal.

3. *“you would do me a great service by inventing something to dispel it”:* This story cycle is explicitly positioned by Diyab in the tradition of *1001 Nights* stories about Harun al-Rashid. The typical narrative opening of these stories, which demands that the caliph venture out into the streets of the city to find distraction, allows the storyteller to draw on strange and marvelous tales that take the reader in unexpected directions. The American short-story master O. Henry recognized the value of the Harun frame and adopted it for “A Madison Square Arabian Night.” In O. Henry’s story, the caliph figure is Carson Chalmers, who sends out his butler to bring the “voice of the people” to him. When he invites a homeless man to his table one night, he gets more than just the remarkable story of his life.

4. *“the effects of your good government”:* The caliph’s trip into the city has a political purpose in this version of the story. This addition by Galland plays upon the idealization of Abbasid Baghdad and the image of Harun al-Rashid nurtured by European intellectuals. At the end of the eighteenth century, the popular English essayist Nathan Drake rhapsodized about the Abbasid caliph—painting him as “the most potent monarch of his race, a lover of learning, art, and science, [and] a warrior of the first fame,” who presided over a great civilization while Europe was in the Dark Ages [*Literary Hours, or Sketches Critical and Narrative* (London, 1798), pp. 200–201].

5. *the clothes of foreign merchants:* This is the same disguise that Harun and Jaafar adopt in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.” It signifies the importance of the merchant class in defining the content and audience for the stories of the *Nights*.

6. *At the end of the bridge:* The river setting at the beginning of this story resembles the opening of “The Story of the Three Apples.” The story of Baba Abdallah has a strong parallel with the third adventure of a Persian romance called *Hatim’s Seven Quests*, which was compiled during the same time period that Diyab delivered his story to Galland. In this third quest, the old man is discovered in a cage hung from a tree, not begging by a bridge (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 183).

7. *with merciless cracks of his whip:* The strangeness of this scene resembles the whipping of the two dogs in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” but here the punishment takes place in public. It attracts not just the curious gaze of the caliph but also a crowd, thus representing a dangerous disturbance in the order of the capital.

8. *noticed a newly built house:* This is an unusual way of linking a story within a Harun tale. Generally, it is a person’s peculiar behavior that attracts the caliph’s attention and leads to an invitation to the palace to tell the strange story that lies behind it.

9. *“I will judge whether you are right”:* The caliph does not just want to hear an explanation for Baba Abdallah’s strange behavior; he also asserts his right to determine whether it is appropriate.

There are some echoes of his function in “The Story of the Three Apples,” but the threat to the security of his realm is much more subtle in this story. The behavior of the beggar is a “poor example,” as he invites insults from unsuspecting strangers in a public place.

10. *“I was born in Baghdad”:* Galland seems to have given Baba Abdallah both a proper name and a backstory, referencing a typical pattern in the tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, which often begin when a young man squanders the wealth he has inherited. From the beginning, this character is set apart from these profligate young men, a technique that seems to match Galland’s effort to present him as more worthy than later events would suggest.

11. *where I met a dervish:* In Arabic popular culture, dervishes were associated with magic, and Diyab was likely drawing from these strands of narrative in creating this tale. The magical entry to the treasure chamber and the magical salve are linked to the dervish’s possession of esoteric knowledge.

12. *I could not deny that this was just:* This tale puts a great deal of weight on issues of justice and Baba Abdallah’s failure to behave in an equitable manner. The use of first-person narration to tell this tale permits greater access to the conflicted thoughts of the narrator and the clearer moral judgment that hindsight provides. The greater emphasis on interiority in this tale is likely the result of Galland’s elaboration of Diyab’s story.

13. *scattered it with drops of fragrant oil:* This description follows the conventional pattern of spell casting apparent in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, and Galland (or Diyab) likely borrowed it from other stories. Verbal formulas are added to a material substance (oil rather than water) to produce the desired result. The method resembles the one used for magical transformations in “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni,” but the circumstances are more akin to those of the magic-cave opening in “The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

14. *envy gripped my heart:* This reference adds a convincing motivation for the actions of Baba Abdallah and ties this tale to a story collection where envy plays a key role.

15. *“remember that riches may be taken away”:* The dervish provides a warning that might be taken as the moral of the story. In the third adventure of *Hatim’s Seven Quests*, the Persian story that parallels this tale, the old man delivers his own warning from his cage: “Do evil to none; if you do, evil will overtake you” (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 183).

16. *“tell me the virtues of this ointment”:* As in the tale of “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu” and “The Story of the Jealous Sisters,” Diyab includes an object with miraculous powers in this story. As he traveled with Paul Lucas through the Middle East and North Africa, Diyab would have learned about the links between treasure hunting and the occult arts. After this experience, the idea of an ointment that would allow one to see the hidden treasures of the world might have had a particular appeal for the Syrian storyteller.

17. *Aching to gaze on all the treasures of the earth:* The internal struggle of Baba Abdallah is enhanced by Galland’s development of the story. In the Persian version of this story recorded in *Hatim’s Seven Quests*, the protagonist is also blinded by an ointment that claims to offer a view of the world’s hidden treasures. A Bosnian version of this story, which may be derived from an Ottoman Turkish tradition, has the greedy man blinded by a magic mirror rather than an ointment” (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 181–83).

18. *“but it is what you deserve”:* The blindness of Baba Abdallah adds some poetic justice to the story, and Galland is careful to point out the justness of the punishment for his readers. The ointment serves a purpose similar to the appetite test in “The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”; in this tale, it proves the unworthiness of Baba Abdallah.

19. *“Now you must repent in private”:* The caliph takes on his usual role of resolving the stories that are narrated for him. In this case, he provides an income to Baba Abdallah with the condition that he no longer beg in public. The ending to this story may reflect Diyab’s own responses to the spectacle of public begging in Paris during the period when he told these stories to Galland. His memoir reveals his concern for those who suffered during the desperately cold winter and food shortages of 1708–9. The Persian version of this story includes a happier ending, as the hero Hatim frees the old man from his cage and cures his blindness with a magic flower (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 184).

20. *“put an end to the disorder”:* In elaborating the caliph’s role in this story, Galland shows that the passions represented by Baba Abdallah (and then Sidi Numan) are irreconcilable with the kind of order he associates with the caliph’s religious and political authority. While Harun’s willingness to intervene to rectify examples of bad governance is present in the Harun al-Rashid stories of the Arabic corpus of the *Nights*, these considerations are stated more clearly in this addition to Galland’s story collection, perhaps as a function of French preoccupation with the role of the monarch.

21. *Sidi Numan changed color:* While Diyab’s recital of this tale clearly indicated that Sidi Numan was reluctant to tell his story and had to be compelled to do so, Galland develops this interior conflict more fully and shows the caliph in the role of a compassionate friend rather than a forceful ruler. This is not the caliph as we see him in “The Story of the Three Apples.”

22. *who had not suffered what I had:* Sidi Numan’s complaint announces the theme of his tale and would not be out of place in one of the cycles of storytelling in the *Nights* that pit men against women. Yasmine Seale sees in this tale “a story about reading and misreading, surface and depth, and how a failure to decipher other people can have disastrous effects. This is played out especially in relations between the sexes.”

23. *As custom requires that we marry without so much as a glance:* Galland seems to have added this explanation of Muslim customs regarding marriage for the benefit of French readers, heightening the exotic quality of the tale that he received from Diyab.

24. *one grain at a time:* Other versions of this tale, likely derived from Galland’s French story, find different ways to describe the meager eating habits of the suspicious wife. In 1937, a Gaelic version of the story includes a woman who consumed only what she could suck through a straw. In a nineteenth-century French version recorded in La Celle-sur-Nièvre, the woman only eats one spoonful of soup at meals (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 59–60).

25. *Her mulishness appalled me:* In keeping with Yasmine Seale’s belief that this story offers an example of misreading between men and women, she suggests that the woman in this story is presented as a strange creature who needs to be decoded—someone “almost belonging to a different species.” Her choices as a translator reflect this interpretation—hence the use of “mulishness” here for Galland’s *opiniâtreté* (stubbornness, obstinacy).

26. *in the company of a female ghoul:* Galland inserts a standard definition of a ghoul—a type of evil jinni that frequents cemeteries and consumes human flesh. Ghouls appear in a series of stories in the *Nights*—including the third and fourth voyages of Sinbad the Sailor.

27. *they ate the hunks of meat together:* The episode of cannibalism in this story links it to episodes in the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor, but those tales took place far from the center of the caliphate's power in Baghdad. Sidi Numan struggles to comprehend the horror of what he has witnessed. This story provided a shorthand to allude to the taboo of cannibalism, used by later writers such as Joseph Conrad. An allusion to the story of Amina appears in Conrad's novella *Falk: A Reminiscence* (1903), in which the mysterious Falk does not eat meat at meals, but only "rice and a little fish." Later, he confesses to cannibalism (p. 174).

28. *as strange as their food:* The text once again reveals Sidi Numan's failure to comprehend his wife, allowing for the possibility of teasing out less literal interpretations of the scene of cannibalism. "We are given to understand that his wife's strangeness may be a product of his failure to read her," Yasmine Seale suggests, "so I wanted to create the sense of a woman who is not so much monstrous as unreadable."

29. *returned as soundlessly as she had left:* In Eastern European variants of this tale, the wife slips away at night to see a lover, and adultery is the motivation for her to transform him into a bird and a dog (Marzolph, *101 Tales*, p. 61).

30. *I rejected all the violent measures:* Galland seems determined to demonstrate the worthiness of the protagonist, who decides to guide his wife gently away from her evil ways.

31. *muttered a few strange words and flung its water at my face:* The sudden attack by Sidi Numan's wife resembles that of the wife of the third old man in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni," and this tale might have been modeled on that one. The capacity of women to effect such magical transformations was referenced in Byron's *Don Juan*, which drew on the *Nights* to speak "Of charms to make good gold and cure bad ails,/Of rocks bewitch'd that open to the knockers, Of magic ladies who, by one sole act,/Transform'd their lords to beasts (but that's a fact)."

32. *Amina was a magician:* If Sidi Numan struggled earlier in the story to understand who his wife was, he now sees her as a magician mired in the practice of the black arts. The magician character takes on different forms in oral versions of this story. In the nineteenth-century French version recorded in La Celle-sur-Nièvre, the wife turns out to be a cannibalistic fairy. In a different French story from Languedoc, the woman is a witch who rides to the cemetery on her broom (Marzolph).

33. *she hunted me into the courtyard:* Among the many stories involving transformation in the *Nights*, this episode develops the perspective of the abused animal to the greatest extent. It goes much further than "The Tale of the Third Old Man" in evoking the sympathy of the reader for the tormented dog, attacked by other animals as well as by bad-tempered humans.

34. *fanatics who hold all dogs to be unclean:* Galland adds this phrase to connect the incident to Muslim beliefs regarding the impurity of dogs. His notes from Diyab's oral delivery of the tale suggest that the original story attributed the actions of the butcher to his "bad temper."

35. *I first bowed my head at him:* Eating practices are used in this story to reveal inner character. These descriptions of the impeccable manners of the transformed Sidi Numan seem to echo passages in the “The Tale of the Second Dervish,” where the prince in ape form demonstrates his mastery of etiquette, calligraphy, and chess. Like that prince, Sidi Numan maintains a full sense of his own identity while in animal form.

36. *thanked him with my devotion:* If Amina is described in alien terms, Seale notes that the male characters, by contrast, are presented as “simpler, more legible figures (the butcher, the cheerful baker, the dog).”

37. *Admiration was soon followed by envy:* As throughout the *Nights*, envy serves as a motive to move the plot forward.

38. *She was the daughter of the kind woman:* The daughter plays the same role that the shepherd’s daughter played in “The Tale of the First Old Man” and that the princess played in “The Tale of the Second Dervish.” All of these women are gifted with the magic ability to see beyond the surface of things, as well as the skills to produce a disenchantment spell.

39. *sprinkled my face with its water:* The spell of disenchantment repeats the elements of the original transformation and closely resembles the spell used to change the calf back into a young man in “The Tale of the First Old Man.” The words spoken by the magician clearly indicate that magic can only restore the humanity that has been given by God in the first place. Even magic must defer to God’s will in the world of the *Nights*.

40. *“you must reclaim your authority”:* The insistence that the man punish his wife and reassert his own power seems to be an addition by Galland, and it can be interpreted as an effort to impose a traditional social order on the disturbing events in this tale. It is not as persuasive as the motivation of the young magician in “The Tale of the First Old Man,” who insists that if action is not taken against the man’s evil wife, she will face retribution for reversing the enchantment.

41. *“she uses her talent to help others”:* Galland seems to be taking some pains to justify the use of magic for his reader and thus to paint the young magician as the archetype of a “good witch.” There is little concern for making these kinds of points in the tales that are part of “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni,” in the oldest section of the *Nights*.

42. *“my books tell me”:* The books of the young magician seem to provide interpretive assistance for the practice of divination.

43. *“Throw this water over her”:* The water and the words appear to be sufficient to effect a magical transformation, even in the hands of someone untrained in magical practices. Transformations are also an important element in the *Nights* tale of “Julnar of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Basim,” which features the son of a mermaid and a human king. In that story, water and a magic spell transform a human into a bird, but a much more elaborate procedure is described to create a magic porridge that transforms a man into a donkey.

44. *I slipped a halter around her neck:* Given the previous description of Amina as mulish, and “the language of strange or animal behavior that runs through Galland’s text,” Seale notes the aptness of Amina’s punishment: “to become a wild mare that needs to be tamed.”

45. *I hope, Commander of the Faithful:* Sidi Numan's rhetorical ease in addressing the caliph contrasts with his difficulty communicating with his wife. "He appears more at ease in the stilted language he speaks to the caliph than in conversation with his wife," Yasmine Seale observes. "He is so wrapped up in his laborious thoughts and formulaic manners that he does not see her at all, except to register her muteness and odd behavior as an act of violence."

46. *"Though I do not wholly condemn your treatment of her":* Sidi Numan clearly expects the caliph to evaluate his conduct according to criteria of justice. Caliph Harun al-Rashid acts to end the public spectacle of cruelty that he and the crowd in Baghdad found so disagreeable, but he does not insist that the wife be returned to her human form.

47. *The Tale of Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal:* This tale is referenced as the third part of "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid" during the storytelling session by Hanna Diyab on May 10, 1709. Diyab does not seem to have finished this third story on that day, and he met Galland again on May 29 to tell the tale of Hasan al-Habbal. During this session, Galland took much more extensive notes than he had on previous occasions.

48. *happiness lies in virtue:* Robert Irwin describes "The Tale of Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal" as a fable about the competing roles played by destiny and hard work in life (see "Afterword").

49. *"More fortunes have been raised on sheer good luck":* This is certainly true in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, where any number of protagonists benefit from extraordinary luck. Aladdin and Ali Baba might be the most famous, but the original Arabic stories also contain such characters as Ali the Cairene, Maʿruf the Cobbler, and Abu Muhammad the Lazy.

50. *"I must feed and clothe them":* The details about the life of the poor ropemaker in this story reveal Diyab's attentiveness to the struggles of the lower social orders and match the sympathy he expresses in his memoir about the hunger and misery experienced by Parisians and migrants to the city during the particularly difficult winter of 1708–9.

51. *As it was my custom:* The detail about carrying money in the folds of a turban comes from Diyab's oral performance of the story. Diyab's memoir of his early life indicates that a turban was his customary head covering while he lived and traveled in the Levant. In including these details, this story reflects what Gerhardt believes is the greatest virtue of the Harun al-Rashid stories—their focus on the realm of everyday human experience (p. 469).

52. *"God has tested me":* These expressions of resignation to God's will appear to have been added by Galland to the story narrated orally by Diyab. They might be a reflection of European stereotypes about Islamic cultures, or an effort to match the behavior of many characters in the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

53. *"You are poor because you deserve it":* In Diyab's tale (recorded in Galland's notes), Saad does not believe the story about the bird stealing the turban, but the dialogue seems to have been improvised by Galland. This argument has an eerie resemblance to the criticism of the undeserving poor in Victorian Britain, and it may reflect Galland's acceptance of a Jansenist belief that only a small portion of humanity was predestined for salvation.

54. *she told me the bargain she had struck:* This bargain resembles the one made by the princess in "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," when she unknowingly exchanges the magic lamp for a

new lamp.

55. *women are often eloquent in anguish:* The scene in which Hasan tries to confront his distraught wife seems to have been an invention of Galland. He uses this as an opportunity to provide lessons to his readers about the consolations of the poor and to reassert his stereotypical notions of gender relations.

56. *a piece of lead:* The choice of a piece of lead as the humble item that will ultimately lead to the fortune of the ropemaker may draw on the practices of alchemy, which sought to turn the base metal of lead into gold.

57. *my wife found in its guts a large diamond:* This is an old story motif that occurs in tales such as "The Ring of Polycrates," recorded by Herodotus, in which a valuable signet ring is found in a fisherman's catch. The story of the ropemaker's luck was one of a series of *Nights* tales that made their way into Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). A young Aureliano Segundo finds an old coverless book in his grandfather's abandoned workshop and immerses himself in the stories: "[T]he boy enjoyed the story of a woman who sat at a table and ate nothing but kernels of rice, which she picked up with a pin, and the story of the fisherman who borrowed a weight for his net from a neighbor and when he gave him a fish in payment later it had a diamond in its stomach, and the one about the lamp that fulfilled wishes and about flying carpets." Curious to know whether all the stories were true, the boy learns "that many years ago the gypsies had brought magic lamps and flying mats to Macondo" (translation by Gregory Rabassa from 1970 edition, p. 183).

58. *glass produced a light so great:* In a sequence of exchanges that depend on the practical value of objects, the diamond is appreciated at first for its ability to give light. This emphasis on the fluorescence of the stone seems to have been in Diyab's original tale, and it may reflect his fascination with the qualities of gemstones, which he had learned about from Paul Lucas during their trip through the Levant. The author William Thackeray had a great love of the *Arabian Nights*, especially of stories like this one, in which characters experienced a sudden change in their financial prospects. He used this particular image in *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50), where he describes the pure, affectionate heart of Laura Bell as "a talisman against evil, [which] lightens up the darkness of life, like Cogia Hassan's famous stone" (vol. 2, p. 309).

59. *a jeweler by trade:* The neighbor practices a profession typical for members of the Jewish minority in the Middle East during this time period.

60. *He haggled a long time:* Diyab, who was employed by a French merchant in Aleppo from early childhood, often includes details of how buyers and sellers seek to gain advantage over one another. In this case, it includes a realistic scenario for how the jeweler comes up with the extraordinary price he has pledged to pay for the diamond.

61. *My wife, with the vanity natural to her sex:* Galland has inserted some tension between the husband and wife that does not appear in Diyab's original, which does not suggest that the woman has a propensity to indulge in shopping for finery. The notes from Diyab's oral performance of the tale shows the couple to be agreed on a reasonable strategy of growing the husband's business and slowly rising in social status to reach the heights suggested at the beginning of the tale.

62. *What enchanted them most:* This pastoral scene seems to have been added by Galland to give the reader a sense of the luxurious surroundings that the ropemaker now inhabits. It positions the amazing events that round off the story in a fantasy of “the Orient.”

63. *“I hold to be the rarest and most precious thing I own”:* The caliph does not need to pronounce judgment on this last narrated story, but Galland has tried to round off the proceedings with the suggestion that the diamond ended up in the caliph’s hands. He also adds the characteristic instruction by the caliph (also present in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad”) that the story be written down and kept in the royal treasury. Despite Galland’s efforts to mirror other tales of Harun al-Rashid in this frame, Mia Gerhardt believes the story possesses “an atmosphere of pomp and circumstance reminiscent of Louis Quatorze’s court ceremonial” (p. 433).

PRINCE AHMAD AND THE FAIRY PARI BANU

The tale that gifted readers with the image of the flying carpet, “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu,” has become one of the most influential stories of the Arabian Nights. *It is the archetypal fairy tale in many respects, and not just because its female protagonist is literally a fairy, or, as she is called in the story, a Persian “peri.” After witnessing a quest for magic objects in exotic locations, the reader is ushered into an amazing fairy kingdom, filled with enormous wealth, to witness a series of trials meant to test the worth of a young prince.*

The quest for marvelous objects that serves as the opening of “Prince Ahmad” is one of the most common plots in narrative culture, and its presence in several European folktales has led some critics to stress a European influence on this tale. The ubiquity of this story pattern in folklore, however, may be the result of the influence of the French tale, told by the Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab to Antoine Galland[1] *in 1708 and added to the last volume of his translation of the* Arabian Nights *in 1717. Narrative historian Ulrich Marzolph has tracked numerous versions of the tale that he believes entered oral narrative culture throughout Europe after Galland’s tale to produce a wide range of retellings, including one in Icelandic (*101 Middle Eastern Tales, *pp. 105–9).*

The tale comprises two essential narratives. In the first part, three princes compete for the hand of the same woman by setting out into the world to secure the most extraordinary object they can find. This opening *narrative mixes the pleasures of foreign lands and busy marketplaces with the sheer enchantment of a magic flying carpet, a remarkable telescope, and an apple with miraculous healing powers. The roots of this story can be found in an eleventh-century Indian story cycle and its Persian adaptation, well before such plots became a feature of the French fairy tales of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, who also sends three princes on a quest before the youngest marries a beautiful woman with magic powers.*

When Prince Ahmad loses his bid to win the bride in the opening adventure, he is drawn into the fairy-tale world of Pari Banu, and the tale becomes a love story in which the hero must prove himself worthy of his powerful bride while also navigating the vicious politics of his home court. In this endeavor, Pari Banu demonstrates her intelligence and rich store of magic and proves herself to be one of the most powerful female characters in the tales of the Arabian Nights. *The quest of the three princes for a marvelous object provided the plot for Douglas Fairbanks's* The Thief of Bagdad *(1924), but it is Pari Banu's gracious presence that highlights the Prince Ahmad plot borrowed by Lotte Reiniger for her groundbreaking animated film of 1926,* The Adventures of Prince Achmed. *Through these seminal adaptations, the story of Ahmad and Pari Banu has gone on to influence numerous retellings of the* Arabian Nights—*through and beyond the striking image of a flying carpet.*

THEN, AFTER THE story of The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid, Shahrazad told the one about Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu.

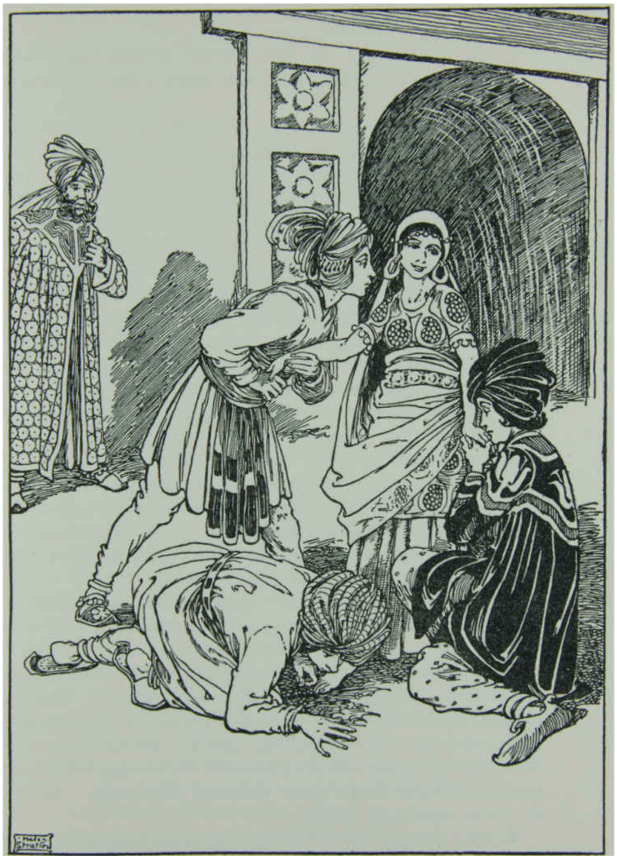
* * *

THERE WAS ONCE A SULTAN, one of Your Majesty's predecessors, who, having sat peacefully on the throne of India[2] for many years, had the pleasure in his old age of seeing that the three princes, his sons, had inherited his qualities, and that the princess, his niece, was the jewel of his court. The eldest prince was named Hussein, the second Ali, the youngest Ahmad, and the princess, his niece, Nurunnihar.

Princess Nurunnihar was the daughter of the sultan's younger brother, who had died not long after his marriage, when the princess was very young. The sultan, remembering the love that bound him to his brother, had taken upon himself the education of his brother's daughter, and he brought her up in his palace with the three princes. The princess was remarkably beautiful,[3] and endlessly bright, with a nobility of spirit that marked her out from the other princesses of her time.

The sultan, hoping to contract an alliance with a neighboring prince, proposed to give him his niece to marry when she reached the proper age. But when the time came, he noticed that the three princes,[4] his sons, loved her passionately. This distressed him, not so much because their love would stand in the way of the alliance he had in mind, but because of the difficulty he foresaw in compelling the younger sons to give her up to their elder brother. He spoke to them each in turn, and, having pointed out that one princess could not possibly marry all three, and that trouble would surely follow if they persisted in their passion, he tried talking them into this choice: They should either let the princess decide which of the three she preferred, or they should abandon their hopes, pledge themselves to any other women they desired, and leave their cousin free to marry the foreign prince. But the sons would not be moved. The sultan sent for them.

“My children,” he said, “since I have failed to persuade you of the pain that lies ahead if you continue to set your hearts on your cousin, and since I am reluctant to use my authority by favoring one of you over the others, I have come up with a means to keep you happy and preserve your friendship, if you are willing to listen. I propose that you travel separately to different lands, so that there is no risk of your meeting, and, as you know my delight in all things rare and strange, I promise my niece to whichever of you shall return with the most extraordinary find.[5] In this way, relying only on chance and your own judgment, you will have no reason to doubt the justice of the outcome. I will give each of you the same sum of money, to cover the costs of the journey and the purchase of your curiosity, but I will ask you to travel without your retinue, whose presence would give you away and would deprive you of the freedom you will need to carry out your task.”



The three princes loved her passionately. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912).*

As the three princes had always honored their father’s wishes, and each flattered himself that fortune would favor him over the others, they consented. The sultan at once counted out the money he had promised, and that very day they gave orders to prepare for their journey. Taking their leave, they readied themselves to depart the following morning.

They all left the city through the same gate, well mounted and well equipped, each dressed like a merchant[6] and attended by a single aide disguised as a slave. Together they rode to the nearest inn, where the road forked into three. At night, over supper, they agreed to travel for a year, and to meet again at that inn, and the first to arrive would wait for the others, so that just as all three had taken their leave of the sultan, they might all return together. At first light the next day, after they had embraced and wished each other well, they mounted their horses and each took a different road.

Prince Hussein, the eldest brother, who had heard tell of the wonders of Bisnagar,[7] followed the road to the ocean. After three months in which he attached himself to different caravans, riding now through desert and barren mountain, now through crowded and fertile lands, he reached Bisnagar, the capital of the kingdom of that name, and the home of its king. He took a room in a khan appointed for foreign merchants, and, having learned that there were four principal quarters where merchants of all sorts had their stalls—in the midst of which stood the castle, or rather the king’s palace, on a vast estate at the center of the city—he visited one of the quarters the next day.

Prince Hussein could not help but admire the quarter where he found himself:[8] a vast area crisscrossed with many streets, all vaulted and shaded from the sun, yet very light. The stalls were of equal size and shape, and those that dealt in the same wares were not scattered all over but grouped together in one street, as it was also with craftsmen.

The multitude of shops, stocked with fine linens from all over India,[9] painted in the brightest colors and depicting figures, trees, and flowers; silks and brocades from Persia, China, and other places; porcelain from Japan; and carpets of every length, astonished him, and he doubted his own eyes. But when he came to the goldsmiths and jewelers, for these were often the same merchants, he was in a kind of rapture to see such quantities of finely wrought gold and silver, and he was dazzled by the pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds,[10] sapphires, and other gems arrayed there. He was amazed by such a concentration of treasure in a single place, and even more by the wealth of the kingdom itself. With the exception of Brahmins and temple-keepers, whose profession it was to retreat from the world, there was hardly a single Indian whose arms and legs were not hung with necklaces, bracelets, and other ornaments, pearls and precious stones that appeared to glow against their skin.

Prince Hussein also admired the great number of rose sellers who crowded the streets. He saw how the Indians delighted in that flower, for not one of them appeared without a bouquet in his hand or a garland on his head, so that the streets were filled with its scent.

After Prince Hussein had walked through the whole quarter, street by street, his mind full of the riches he had seen, he grew tired. A merchant noticed this and invited him with great courtesy to sit down in his shop, which he did. He had not been there long when he saw a trader pass by with a carpet on his arm, about six feet square, for which he wanted thirty purses.[11] He called the trader in and asked to see the carpet, which seemed to him exorbitant for such a small and shabby object. He examined it well, then told the trader that he could not understand how such an unimpressive carpet could be set at so high a price.

The trader, who took him for a merchant, replied, “If this price seems excessive, you will be astonished to hear that I have been told to push it up to forty purses, and not to part with it for less than that.”

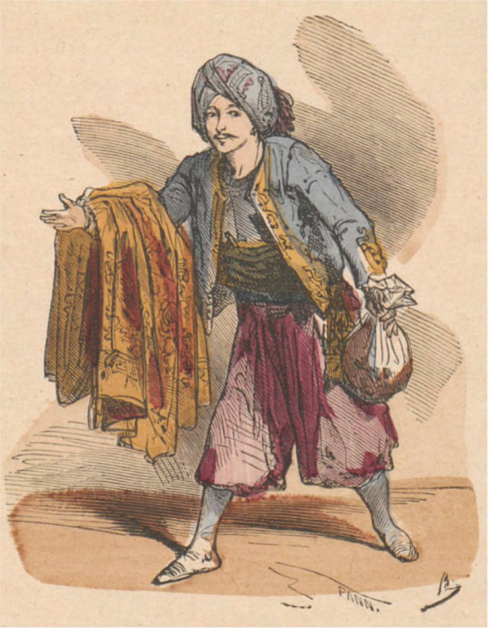
“Then,” said Prince Hussein, “it must be precious in some other way that escapes me.”

“You have guessed it,” said the trader, “and you shall understand better when you learn that whoever sits on this carpet will be transported wherever he wishes to be,[12] in an instant, without any obstacles.”

At the trader’s words, Prince Hussein, considering that the principal motive of his journey was to bring the sultan, his father, some curiosity of the rarest kind, decided that nothing he might acquire could please the sultan more than this.

“If that carpet,” he said to the trader, “is as wonderful as you say, I shall happily pay you the forty purses, and give you a gift besides.”

“I have told you the truth,” said the trader, “and to be convinced of it, you need only agree to the bargain on the condition that I show you proof. Since you don’t have the forty purses on your person, and I would have to accompany you to your khan to collect them, with the shopowner’s permission I suggest that we go into the back room, where I will lay out the carpet. You and I shall sit on it, and you will make the wish to be taken to your room at the khan. If we are not transported there at once, there shall be no bargain, and you will have lost nothing. As for your present, though I am paid for my trouble by the seller, I will gratefully accept it as a kindness.”

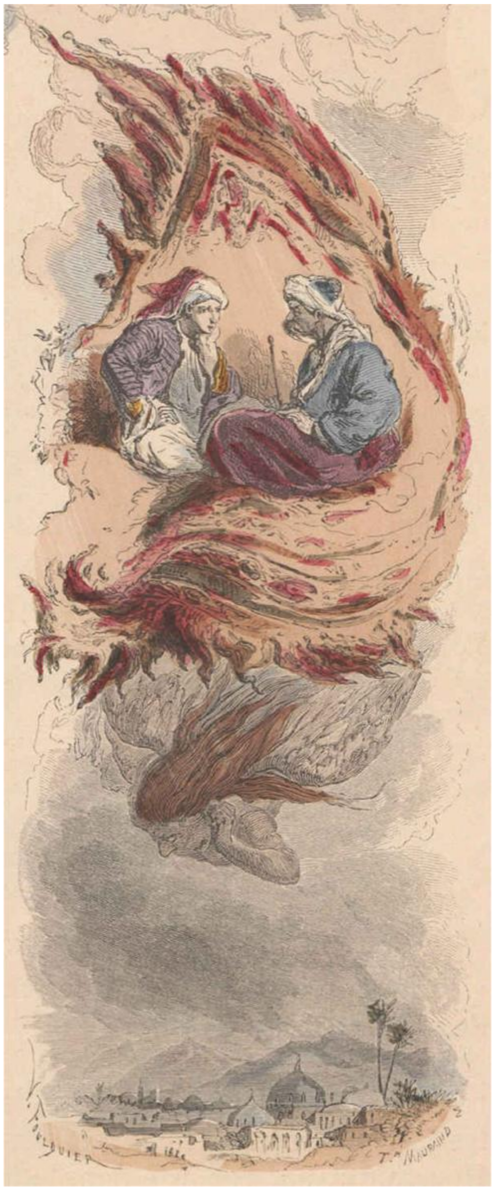


“He saw a trader pass by with a carpet on his arm.” Illustration from Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

On the credit of the trader, the prince accepted these conditions. They concluded the bargain and, with the owner’s permission, stepped into the back room. The trader laid out the carpet. They both sat on it, and as soon as the prince formed the desire to be transported[13] to his room at the khan, he found himself there with the trader. Since he needed no further proof of the carpet’s virtues, he counted out the forty purses in gold, to which he added a gift of twenty gold coins for the trader’s pleasure.

In this way, Prince Hussein came to own the carpet, overjoyed at having acquired, on his arrival in Bisnagar, a piece so rare he had no doubt it would win him the hand of Nurunnihar. It seemed impossible that either of his brothers should return with anything comparable to what he had been lucky enough to find. His work in Bisnagar done, he could, by sitting on the carpet, proceed that day to their meeting place, but he would then have too long to wait. As he was curious to see the king of Bisnagar and his court,[14] and to acquaint himself with the laws, customs, and beliefs of that kingdom, he chose to spend the following months satisfying his curiosity.

It was customary for the king of Bisnagar to grant an audience to foreign merchants once a week. In this guise, Prince Hussein, who did not want to be seen for what he was, met him several times; and because this prince, who happened to be very good-looking, was also extremely bright, and because his impeccable manners set him apart from the other merchants who appeared before the king, it was to him that the king spoke to inquire about the sultan of India, and about the strength, wealth, and government of his empire.



They both sat on the carpet and Prince Hussein formed the desire to be transported. Illustration from Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

The prince spent the other days visiting all that was remarkable about the city and its surroundings. Among other things, he saw a temple[15] that had the peculiarity of being made entirely of bronze. It was ten cubits square at the base, and fifteen in height. Its most beautiful part was an idol of solid gold, tall as a man, whose eyes were two rubies that had been set with such care that it seemed to those who looked at it, at whichever angle they stood, that they were themselves being watched. He saw another one no less admirable. This was in a village where there was a garden of ten acres, studded with roses and other splendid flowers, bordered by a low wall to prevent animals from approaching. In the middle of this plain, there rose a terrace paved with stones, joined together so skillfully they looked like a single stone. A domed temple of shining red marble stood at the center of the terrace, fifty cubits high, and it could be seen for miles around. The dome was decorated with three rows of bright images, and the temple itself was so filled with pictures, engravings, and idols that no part of it was unadorned.

In the mornings and evenings, the temple hosted ritual ceremonies, followed by games, concerts, dances, and feasts. The temple's ministers subsisted on the offerings of pilgrims who came in crowds from the farthest reaches of the kingdom to make their wishes.

At last, Prince Hussein was witness to a solemn celebration, a yearly affair at the court of Bisnagar, attended by satraps of every province, commanders of every stronghold, governors and judges from the cities, and the most influential brahmins. Some lived so far away that the journey took them four months. The crowd, a countless multitude of Indians, assembled in a vast plain as far as the eye could see. It was a striking sight. The plain had in its center a large square, bounded on one side by a splendid scaffolding nine stories high, supported by forty pillars, and intended for the king, his court, and the foreigners he received every week. Inside, it was magnificently furnished, and the outside was painted with all sorts of animals, birds, insects, and even flies and fleas, all in their natural colors. More scaffoldings, at least four or five stories high, formed the three other sides. Their decorations were changed hourly.

All around the square were a thousand elephants,[16] each harnessed in great style and loaded with a square wooden tower painted gold, out of which leaned musicians and jesters. The elephants' trunks, ears, and the rest of their bodies were painted in cinnabar and other colors to represent grotesque figures.

Of the entire spectacle, what most brought home to Prince Hussein the skill, industry, and creative genius of the Indians was the sight of an elephant, larger and stronger than the others, its four paws pressed on the end of a pole thrust into the ground, keeping time, with its trunk, to the sound of music. He was just as impressed by another elephant: No less strong, it stood on the end of a beam laid across a pole, ten feet above the ground, with an enormous stone hanging from the other end, which acted as a counterweight, so that now high, now low, in the presence of the king and his court, the elephant moved in time with the music, just like the first. The Indians, having tied the counterbalancing stone to the beam, had brought the other end to earth with human strength, and had mounted the elephant onto it.

Prince Hussein could have happily extended his stay in Bisnagar. Countless other marvels would have kept him there until the last day of the year, when he was to join his brothers. But he was satisfied with what he had seen, and the object of his desire preoccupied him without rest, indeed, as the force of his passion for Nurunnihar increased every day since he had made his purchase, it occurred to him that he might feel calmer and closer to his happiness if he were not so far away. Having settled with the doorman at the khan for the room he had taken, and given him a time to collect the key, without saying how he would leave, he entered the room and closed the door, leaving the key in the lock. He laid out the carpet and sat down on it with his aide. Then he collected his thoughts, and, as he formed the wish to be transported to the inn where he had left his brothers, he found that he had arrived. There he stayed, and, still disguised as a merchant, he waited.

Prince Ali, three days after parting from his brothers, followed a caravan on the road to Persia.[17] Four months later, he arrived in Shiraz, then the capital of that kingdom. He had become friendly on the way with a small number of merchants, having passed himself off as a jeweler, so he took up residence with them in the same khan.

The following day, while the merchants were busy unpacking their wares, Prince Ali, who traveled only for his pleasure and had brought nothing but what he needed in order to do so comfortably, made for that part of town where they sold gemstones, wrought gold and silver, brocades, silks, linens, and other rare and precious things. This was a vast, vaulted place,[18] supported by thick pillars around which the shops were arranged, and it was known in Shiraz as the *bedesten*. Prince Ali crossed the *bedesten* in every direction, admiring the riches displayed there. Among the traders who came and went, hawking their goods, he was surprised to see one carrying a small pipe made of ivory,[19] about a foot long and no thicker than a thumb, which he cried at thirty purses. First he imagined the trader was not in his right mind. To be sure, he approached a shop.

“Tell me,” he asked the merchant, pointing to the trader, “if I am mistaken. Has that man, who wants thirty purses for a small ivory pipe, lost control of his senses?”

“Unless he has gone mad since yesterday,” said the merchant, “I can assure you he is the wisest of all our traders, the most experienced, and the most trusted when it comes to valuable things. As for that pipe, it must somehow be worth the thirty purses, if not more. He will be back this way in a moment. Let us call him in, and you can ask him yourself. In the meantime, please sit on my sofa and rest.”

Prince Ali accepted the merchant’s kind offer, and soon afterward the trader passed by again. When the merchant called him by his name, he approached.

“Answer this man,” he said, indicating Prince Ali, “who asks if you are not mad to cry at thirty purses such an unimpressive pipe. I would be amazed myself if I did not know you to be a wise man.”

The trader said to Prince Ali, “You are not the first to call me mad when it comes to this pipe. But you shall judge yourself whether I am or not, when I tell you its property. I hope you will make as good a bid for it as those I have shown it to already, who had as bad an opinion of me as you.”

“First,” the trader continued, presenting the pipe to the prince, “consider that this pipe is furnished with a piece of glass at both ends, and that by looking through one of them, you will see whatever you wish to see.”[20]

“I am willing,” said the prince, “to make amends for any dishonor I may have brought upon you, if you will show me the truth of what you claim.”

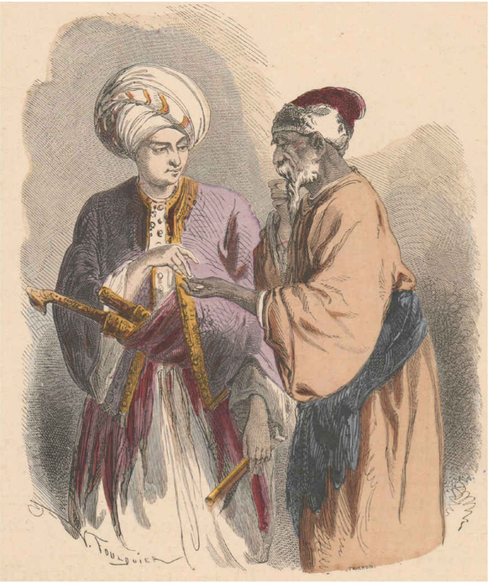
And, since he was holding the pipe in his hands, he said, “Show me where to look, so that I can see for myself.”

The trader showed him. The prince looked, and as he wished to see his father, the sultan of India, he saw him in perfect health, sitting on his throne, in the midst of his council. Then, since there was nothing in the world so dear to him, after his father, as Princess Nurunnihar, he wished to see her,[21] and he saw her in her dressing room laughing, in cheerful spirits, with her women about her.

Prince Ali needed no further proof that this pipe was the most precious thing, not only in Shiraz but in the world, and he thought that if he neglected to buy it, never would he find such a rarity on his travels, not in Shiraz, were he to stay ten years, or anywhere else.

He said to the trader, “I take back my doubts about your judgment. But I believe you will be satisfied by the reparation I am prepared to make in buying this pipe. Since I would not want another to have it, you need only name the seller’s price. Relieve yourself of the trouble of crying and follow me to my room. I will give you the sum at once.”

The trader swore that he was under orders to sell it for forty purses, and if this was in doubt, he would lead him there himself. The Indian prince took him at his word. When they arrived at the khan where he lodged, he counted out forty purses in gold, and, in this way, he came to have the ivory pipe.



Prince Ali purchases the ivory pipe. Illustration from Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

Prince Ali's pleasure was made even sweeter by the thought that the princes, his brothers, could not have found anything so rare and wonderful, and that Princess Nurunnihar would therefore be his journey's reward. All he wanted now was to learn about the court of Persia without breaking his disguise, and to see the marvels of Shiraz and its surroundings[22] as he waited for the caravan with which he had come to return on the road to India. When the caravan was ready to leave, Prince Ali had satisfied his curiosity. He joined it, and they set off. No accident detained them on the way or slowed their progress, so that with nothing more to complain about than the long days and the fatigue of travel, he reached the meeting place, where Prince Hussein had already arrived. They waited there together for their brother.

Prince Ahmad had taken the road to Samarkand. The day after his arrival, he made straight for the *bedesten*, just like his brothers had done. No sooner was he inside than a trader walked past with an artificial apple in his hand, which he cried at thirty-five purses. Ahmad stopped the trader.

"Show me that apple," he said, "and tell me what makes it so special that it should be set at such a price."

The trader gave him the apple to examine.

"Seen from the outside," he said, "this apple is really nothing much. But if you consider its properties, its virtues, and the amazing use that can be made of it, you will see that it is priceless, and that whoever possesses it is the owner of a great treasure. In short, it cures all diseases,[23] even the deadliest, such as pleurisy, scarlet fever, the plague, and other sicknesses of that sort. All patients, even those on their deathbeds, are restored to perfect health just by smelling it."

"If what you say is true," replied Prince Ahmad, "the virtues of this apple are wonderful, and it is indeed priceless. But what grounds have I, an honest man, to be convinced that you have not misled me?"

"The thing," said the trader, "is known by the whole city of Samarkand.[24] Without going any further, ask any of the merchants here, and see what they say. Some of them will tell you they would not be alive today if they had not made use of this marvelous remedy. It is the fruit of the learning and experiments of a celebrated philosopher of this city,[25] who devoted his whole life to the study of the virtues of plants and minerals, and who at last created the composition you see here, thanks to which he performed such astonishing cures in this city that his name shall never be forgotten. But he died suddenly himself, before he could use his own remedy, and his widow, left with very little and a great many children to raise, has resolved to sell it."

While the trader informed Prince Ahmad of the virtues of the artificial apple, many people gathered around them and confirmed what he had said. One of them said he had a friend who was then so dangerously ill that his life was despaired of, and that it was a favorable opportunity to show Prince Ahmad the experiment. Prince Ahmad told the trader he would give him forty purses if the apple cured the sick man.

"Come," said the trader, who was under orders to sell it at that price, "let us go and make the experiment, and the apple shall be yours. I can assure you that it will have the same effect as it had on all the others whose lives were despaired of and who were brought back from the gates of death."

The experiment succeeded, and the prince, having counted out the forty purses[26] for the trader and taken the apple, waited patiently for the first caravan that would take him back to India. He used this time to see Samarkand and its surroundings, and particularly the valley of Sogdia,[27] which the Arabs consider to be one of the four paradises on earth for the beauty of its gardens and palaces, and the abundance of its fruit in summer.

Prince Ahmad took the first caravan headed toward home, and despite the inevitable discomforts that attend a long journey, arrived in perfect health at the inn, where the princes, his brothers, were waiting.

Prince Ali had arrived a short while before Ahmad, and he asked his brother Hussein how long he had been there. Hearing that it had been three months, he said, "You must not have gone very far."

"I will say nothing," answered Prince Hussein, "about where I have been, but I can promise you it took me three months to get there."

"In that case," said Prince Ali, "you must not have stayed very long."

"You are wrong, brother," Hussein replied. "I stayed four or five months, and could easily have stayed longer."

“Unless you flew back,” said Prince Ali, “I cannot see how you expect me to believe that you have been here for three months.”

“I have told you the truth,” said Prince Hussein. “It is a mystery I shall reveal when our brother arrives, along with the rarity I found on my travels. As for you, I do not know what you have brought back, but it cannot be much: Your bundles seem no heavier than before.”

“You are one to speak!” said Prince Ali. “Apart from that modest carpet which you have draped over your sofa, you do not seem to have done any better. But since you insist on being mysterious about your find, you will not mind if I do the same about mine.”

Prince Hussein shot back: “My discovery is so clearly better than any other that I will show it to you without fear, calm in the knowledge that whatever you have found cannot possibly compare. But let us wait for our brother Ahmad before we give away what fortune has given us.”

Prince Ali thought better than to challenge Prince Hussein. He contented himself with the belief that if the pipe he had found was not more desirable, it could not possibly be thought inferior, and he agreed to delay showing it until their brother joined them.

When Prince Ahmad arrived, they embraced each other tenderly, delighted to be meeting again where they had parted ways. Prince Hussein, the eldest, was the first to speak.

“Brothers,” he said, “there will be time to entertain each other with stories of our travels, but let us get to the more pressing matter. We all know what has brought us here. Let us come clean about our finds, so we may know at once which of us our father is likely to favor over the others.”

“To set the example,” continued Prince Hussein, “I will say that the curiosity I have brought from the kingdom of Bisnagar is none other than the carpet on which I sit. As you can see, it is not much to look at. But when I tell you its virtue, you cannot fail to agree it is like nothing else. Quite simply, if you sit on it as we are sitting now, and if you wish to be transported to a place, however far away, you will find yourselves there in a moment.[28] I tried it myself before counting out the forty purses it cost me, which I am not likely to regret. Once I had seen my fill of Bisnagar and was ready to leave, I needed no other vehicle than this carpet to bring me here, along with my servant, who can vouch for the time it took. I will let you try it yourselves if you like, but first you must tell me whether your own finds can even compare with my carpet."

When Prince Hussein had finished praising his carpet, it was Prince Ali's turn to speak.

"Brother," he said, "if what you say is true, which I do not doubt, no one could deny that your carpet is among the most wonderful things it is possible to imagine. But you must admit that there might be other things, if not more wonderful, at least as wonderful in another genre. This ivory pipe, for example, seems no more impressive than your carpet. Yet I paid the same amount for it, and I am just as proud of my find as you are of yours. Fair-minded as you are, you will be forced to agree that I have not been cheated when you learn of its property, which is to show you whatever you wish to see.[29] Do not take my word for it. Here is the pipe. See for yourselves whether I have deceived you."

Prince Hussein took the ivory pipe from Prince Ali. As he pressed his eye to one end, wishing to see Princess Nurunnihar and find out how she was, his brothers were amazed to see his expression change suddenly into one of shock and great sorrow. Before they could ask what the matter was, Prince Hussein cried, "Princes! We have journeyed in vain, and our hopes to win the lovely Nurunnihar have come to nothing. The princess has only moments to live. I have just seen her in bed, surrounded by her attendants and her eunuchs, who are full of tears and seem to expect nothing more than to see her leave this world. Here, see for yourselves, and grieve with me."

Prince Ali took the ivory pipe. He looked, saw the same sight with the same sadness, and passed it to his brother. When Prince Ahmad saw the princess on her deathbed, he said, "Brothers, Nurunnihar, whom we all love equally, seems to have reached the end. But if we act fast, I believe there is still time to save her."

At these words, Prince Ahmad took the artificial apple from his pocket and, showing it to his brothers, said, "This apple cost me no less than you have each paid on your travels. Its property, in short, is to restore health to a sick person, even on the verge of death. I have seen it tested and cannot doubt it. Let us do what we must, speed to Nurunnihar and try its effect on her."

"If that is so," said Prince Hussein, "we must go to the princess at once on my carpet. Let us waste no time. Come, sit beside me; it is large enough for the three of us. But first, let us each tell our servants to leave at once and to meet us at the palace.

Once they had given this order, Prince Ali and Prince Ahmad sat down with Prince Hussein, and since they all wanted the same thing, they made the same wish to be transported to the chamber of Princess Nurunnihar. Their wish was granted so quickly that they were only aware of arriving at the desired place, not of having departed the place they had left.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

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"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

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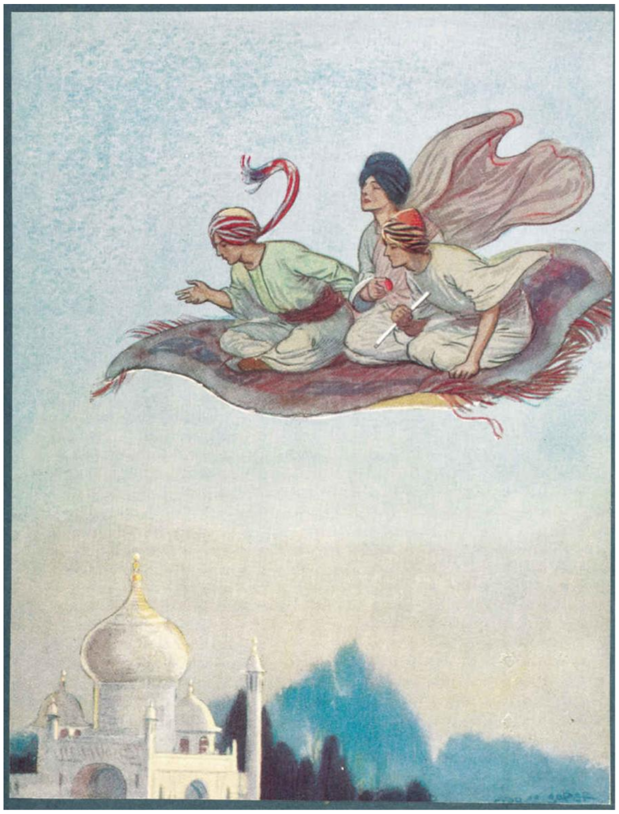
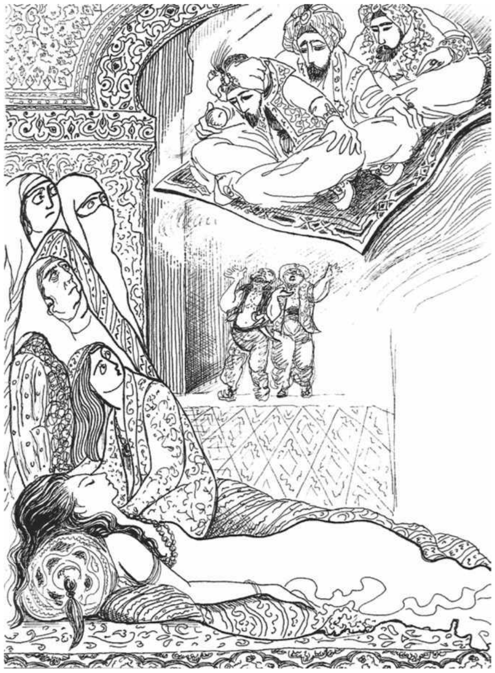
And Shahrazad agreed.



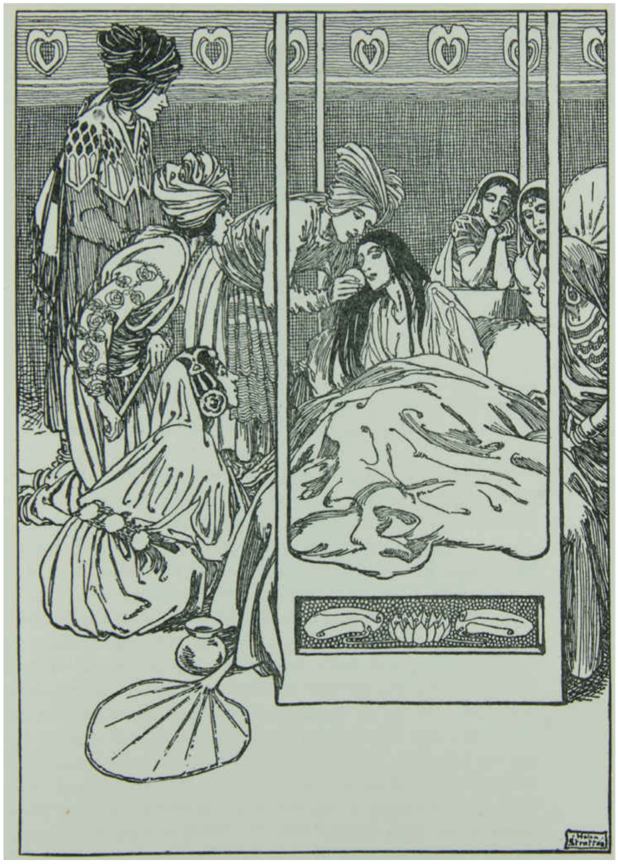
The princes return on the magic carpet. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

The presence of the three princes, being so unexpected, frightened the palace attendants and eunuchs, who could not understand what spell had brought the three young men into their midst. They did not even recognize them at first, and the eunuchs were ready to jump on them as if they had entered the place without permission. But they quickly realized their mistake and knew them for who they were.



The sudden appearance of the three young men frightens the palace staff. Illustration by Lila Figueiredo, restored and printed by permission of her estate.

No sooner had Prince Ahmad found himself in Nurunnihar’s chamber and seen the dying princess than he rose from the carpet with his brothers, went to the bedside, and held the marvelous apple under her nose. Moments later, the princess opened her eyes,[30] turned her head this way and that, and sat up, asking to be dressed, with no more fuss than if she had just woken from a long sleep. Her attendants informed her that the three princes were the ones to thank for her recovery, and particularly Prince Ahmad. At once she told them her joy and thanked them all, particularly Ahmad. Since she had asked to get dressed, the princes simply expressed their pleasure at having arrived in time to save her, each in his own way, from the danger they had seen her in, and they wished her a long life before leaving the room.



Prince Ahmad held the apple under her nose and she opened her eyes. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912).*

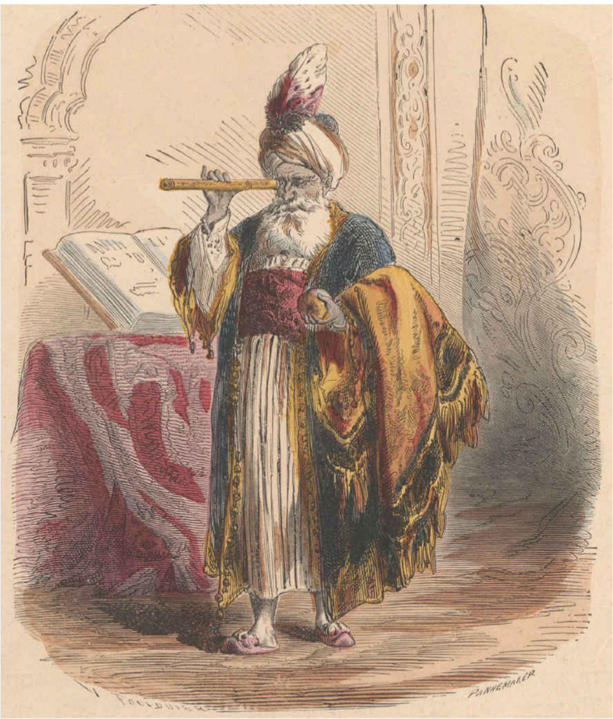
As the princess dressed, the princes went to throw themselves at the feet of the sultan, their father, and pay their respects. When they appeared before him, they found that the chief eunuch had already informed him of their arrival and of the manner of the princess's extraordinary recovery. The sultan embraced them, and the pleasure of seeing his sons mingled with the joy of learning that his niece, whom he loved as though she were his daughter, and whose life had been despaired of by her doctors, had recovered her health in such a marvelous way.

After the usual compliments had been exchanged, the princes presented in turn the rarities they had brought home from their travels: Prince Hussein his carpet, which he had been careful enough to take with him before leaving the princess's chamber; Prince Ali, the ivory pipe; and Prince Ahmad, the artificial apple. Having each praised his object and given it to their father to hold, the princes begged him to say which one he preferred, and thus to declare which son he would give to Nurunnihar in marriage, as he had promised.

The sultan, after listening with care to everything the princes had to say, and knowing how Nurunnihar had just been cured, remained silent for some time, as though unsure how to answer. Finally he spoke. These were his wise words.

“My sons,” he said, “I would choose one of you with pleasure, were I able to do so with justice. But consider for yourselves whether such a thing is possible. Prince Ahmad, it is true that the princess has your apple to thank for her recovery, but would it have been of any use had Prince Ali’s ivory pipe not alerted you to the danger she was in, and had Prince Hussein’s carpet not allowed you to come to her aid at once?

“Prince Ali, your ivory pipe enabled you and your brothers to see that you would soon lose the princess, so no one can deny her debt to you. It must also be admitted that this knowledge would have been useless without the artificial apple and the carpet. As for you, Prince Hussein, the princess would be ungrateful if she failed to extend her thanks for your carpet, which proved so necessary for her recovery. But consider that you would not have known to use it without Prince Ali’s ivory pipe, and the little good it would have done without Prince Ahmad’s artificial apple. Given that neither the carpet, nor the pipe, nor the apple offers the slightest advantage to any of you, but rather makes each of you perfectly equal, and that Nurunnihar can only marry one man, all you have achieved on your travels is the honor of contributing equally to her recovery.”



The sultan considers the merits of the three magical objects. Illustration from Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

“In light of this,” added the sultan, “I must find another way of choosing one among you. There is time enough between now and night. Let us do it today. Now, each of you take a bow and arrow and go to that plain outside the city where they exercise horses. I will follow you there, and I promise to give Princess Nurunnihar to the one who shoots the farthest.

“I must also thank you in general, and each of you in particular, for the presents you have brought me. My cabinet is not short on curiosities,[31] but it has nothing to compare with the carpet, the ivory pipe, and the artificial apple, which will have pride of place there.”

The three princes had nothing to say against the sultan’s decision. They were each given a bow and arrow, which they gave to the aides who had appeared as soon as they heard news of their arrival, and they all went down to the plain, followed by a large crowd.

Before long, the sultan arrived. Prince Hussein, as the eldest, shot first. Prince Ali shot next, and his arrow landed far beyond his brother’s. Prince

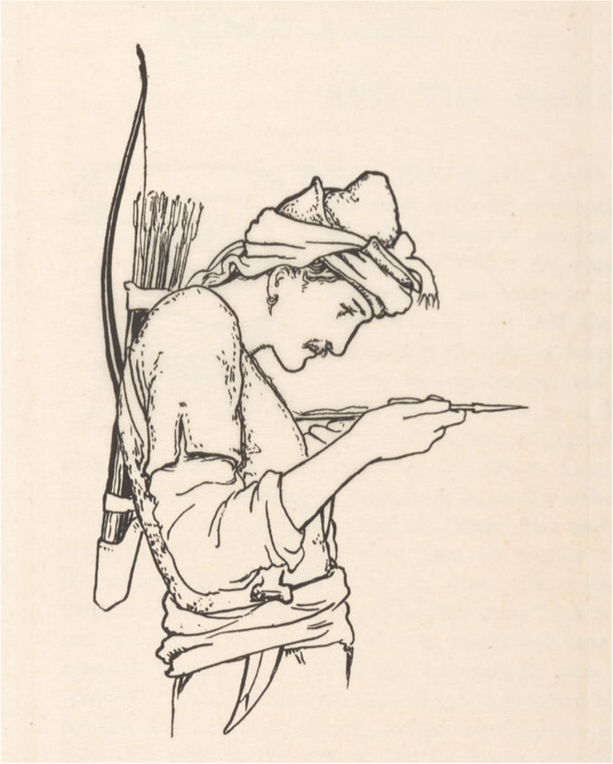
Ahmad shot last, but his arrow disappeared from view, and nobody saw it land.

Try as everyone did, Ahmad's arrow was not to be found far or near. Though it was believable that Ahmad had shot the farthest, and that he therefore deserved to have Nurunnihar, it was nevertheless necessary to find the arrow for the matter to be certain, and no amount of pleading could convince the sultan to make a decision in his favor. He gave the order for wedding preparations to begin, and a magnificent feast was laid a few days later.

Prince Hussein would not honor the feast with his presence. His love for Princess Nurunnihar was so fierce and so sincere[32] that he could not bear the mortification of seeing her pass into the arms of Prince Ali, who, he thought, neither deserved her nor loved her so well. His pain was so sharp that he left the court, gave up his title to the throne, and went to train as a dervish under a famous sheikh who was said to lead an exemplary life, with his many disciples, in pleasant solitude.

Prince Ahmad, for the same reason, did not attend the wedding, but, unlike his older brother, he did not leave the world. Unable to understand how his arrow could have vanished, and determined to search for it to put his mind at rest, he returned to the spot where the other arrows had landed. From there, he walked straight ahead, looking on both sides, and went so far that he began to think his trouble was all in vain. Yet almost despite himself, he kept on until he came to some steep rocks, in barren country four leagues from where he had started, which marked the end of the road.

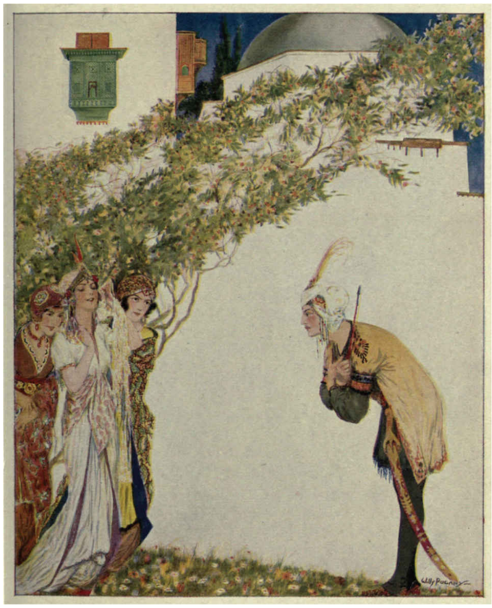
An arrow caught his eye. He picked it up and was amazed.



"An arrow caught his eye." Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893).*

"It is mine," he thought, "but neither I nor any other human could ever shoot an arrow so far away." Finding it lying flat, not stuck into the ground, he decided it must have bounced against the rock. "This mystery,"[33] he said to himself, "can only be to my advantage. Perhaps fortune, having deprived me of my happiness, has some consolation in store."

As the rock face was full of crags and caves, the prince slipped into one of the hollows, and, as he looked around, he saw an iron door with no apparent lock. He feared it would be shut, but when he pushed, it yielded, and he found himself descending a gentle slope, his arrow in hand. At first, he thought he was walking into darkness, but soon a very different light succeeded the one that was fading, and he entered into a large space. At fifty or sixty paces away, he saw a splendid palace that he could only admire at a glance. For at that moment, a woman of majestic bearing, dressed in silks and jewels that matched her beauty, advanced as far as the porch, attended by a retinue of women.



Prince Ahmad meets Pari Banu. Illustration by Willy Pogany, a Hungarian illustrator renowned for his art nouveau illustrations of myths and fairy tales. From More Tales from the Arabian Nights, *ed. Frances Jenkins Olcott (New York, 1915).*

As soon as Prince Ahmad saw her, he quickened his pace. The woman, who saw him approach, called him by his name and bid him come closer.

It was no small surprise to Prince Ahmad to hear his own name in a place he had never heard of, though it neighbored his father's capital,[34] and he wondered how he could be known to a woman who was a stranger to him. At last, he threw himself at her feet and, rising, he said, "My lady, I owe you a thousand thanks for your welcome in a place I thought my curiosity had led me to enter imprudently. With the deepest respect, dare I ask how it happens that you know my name, and how you, who live so close, are unknown to me?"

"Prince," said the woman, "let us go into the parlor. There we can talk at ease."

Leading the way, the woman showed Prince Ahmad into a vaulted room, painted in gold and blue, whose proportions and furnishings were so splendid and so novel that he exclaimed he had never seen anything like it.

"I assure you," said the woman, "this is the least of my rooms. You will say so yourself when I have finished showing you the palace."

She sat on a sofa and invited the prince to sit beside her.

“Prince,” she said, “you are surprised that I should know you and not be known to you, but you will no longer be surprised when I tell you who I am. Your religion, as you are well aware, teaches you to believe that the world is inhabited by jinn[35] as well as by humans. I am the daughter of one of the most powerful and distinguished jinn, and my name is Pari Banu. You must not be surprised that I know you,[36] as well as your father, your brothers, and Princess Nurunnihar. I am even aware of your love and your great journey, which I could recount to you in the smallest details, since I am the one[37] who put that artificial apple up for sale in Samarkand, along with the carpet in Bisnagar and the ivory pipe in Shiraz. All I have to add is that you seemed to me worthy of a happier fate than that of having Nurunnihar, and, to help you achieve it, as I watched you shoot that arrow, foreseeing that it would not go farther than Prince Hussein’s, I took it into the air and sent it flying against the rocks near which you found it. Now it is up to you to make use of the opportunity that presents itself.”

As the fairy Pari Banu pronounced these words with a different tone, and a tenderness came into her eyes and her cheeks reddened, the prince had no trouble understanding what sort of opportunity she had in mind. All at once, he considered that Princess Nurunnihar could never be his, and that the fairy Pari Banu outshone her infinitely in beauty, charm, wit, and, as far as he could guess by the splendor of her palace, wealth. He blessed the moment he thought to look for his arrow a second time, and, yielding to the new object of his desire,[38] he said, “My lady, were I to taste no other happiness in all my life than that of being your slave, I would think myself the luckiest of men. Forgive me the boldness that inspires me to ask this favor. Do not refuse to admit to your court a prince who is entirely devoted to you.”

“Prince,” answered the fairy, “I do not wish to admit you to my court as a slave, but as the master of my being and the joint owner of all that is mine, by asking you to take me as your wife. I hope you will not take offense that I preempt you with this offer. It is not customary for women to make such advances to men,[39] but fairies do so freely and without shame.”

Prince Ahmad had nothing to say to this, but as he was filled with gratitude, he thought it best to express his thanks by leaning to kiss the hem of her dress. Before he could do so, she offered him her hand, which he kissed, and holding on to his, she said, “Prince Ahmad, will you not pledge your faith to me, as I give you mine?”

“Yes, my lady!” replied the prince in rapture. “I give it to you with my heart, without the least reserve.”

“Then,” said the fairy, “you are my husband, and I am your wife. We do not celebrate marriage with the same ceremonies: For us, it is a firmer bond than it is for humans, despite the fuss they make over it. Now, while preparations are made for our wedding feast this evening, a light meal will be brought for you, as I suppose you have eaten nothing today. Then I will show you the apartments of my palace, and you shall judge if this room is not the meanest part of it.”

Some of the fairy’s women, who had sat in the parlor with them and guessed her intentions, left the room and returned soon afterward with refreshments and good wine.

When Prince Ahmad had eaten and drunk his fill, the fairy Pari Banu led him through all her apartments, where he saw diamonds, rubies, emeralds,[40] and all kinds of fine jewels, mixed with pearls, agate, jasper, porphyry, and all sorts of the most precious marbles, to say nothing of the richness of the furniture, which was inestimable. Everything was in such profusion that he gasped, and he declared that there could be nothing like it in the world.

“Prince,” said the fairy, “if you admire my palace so much, which indeed is very beautiful, what would you say of the palaces of our chiefs, which are altogether more beautiful, spacious, and grand? I could also let you admire my garden, but it will be for another time: Night is falling, and dinner awaits.”

The next room they entered,[41] and where the table was laid, was the last apartment the prince had not seen, and not in the least inferior to the others. As he entered, he admired the light produced by an infinite number of candles scented with amber, which, instead of creating confusion, were arranged with such symmetry that they brought only delight to the eye. He admired a long bench heavy with tableware, so finely wrought that the craftsmanship was more precious than the weight of its gold, and several choruses of women, all ravishing and richly dressed, who began to sing, accompanied by the most harmonious instruments he had ever heard.

They took their seats at the table, and as Pari Banu took care to help Prince Ahmad to the most delicate dishes, which she named as she invited him to taste them, and he found them exquisite. He cried out that the pleasure she brought him far surpassed any to be had among men. He heaped praise, too, on the wine, which they did not taste until dessert was served. This consisted of the finest fruits and sweets.

At last, the fairy Pari Banu and Prince Ahmad left the table, which was taken away at once, and sank into the sofa, resting on silk cushions embroidered with fine needlework. At that moment, a multitude of jinn and fairies entered and began to perform a most surprising dance, which they continued until the fairy and the prince stood up. Then the jinn and the fairies danced out of the room and led the newlyweds to the door of their nuptial chamber. There they arranged themselves in rows to allow them to pass, and at last they left them in peace.

The wedding feast was continued the next day, or, rather, the days following the celebration were a continual feast that Pari Banu varied with new dishes, new concerts and dances, new entertainments so wild and so remarkable that Prince Ahmad could not imagine seeing their like in all his life on earth.

The fairy's intention was not only to show the prince how sincerely she loved him, but also to convince him that he would never find elsewhere the happiness he felt by her side, so that he would attach himself to her completely, and never leave her. Her plan was a perfect success: Prince Ahmad's love only grew stronger with time, to the point where it was no longer in his power to cease loving her, even were she to lose interest in him.

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

After six months, Prince Ahmad, who had always loved and honored his father the sultan,[42] had a great desire to know how he was, and since he could only be satisfied by going to see for himself, he confided in the fairy, and asked for her leave. The fairy was alarmed. Fearing this might be some excuse to abandon her, she said, “What have I done to displease you, that now you want to leave? Could it be that you have forgotten your pledge, and no longer love me?”

“My queen,” replied Prince Ahmad, “I would be unworthy of your love if I did not return it in kind. If my request has upset you, I beg for your forgiveness, and will do anything to redeem myself. My intention was not to displease you, only to honor the sultan my father, and to relieve him of the sorrow I must have caused him with my long absence. But since you do not wish for me to give him this consolation, my wishes will be yours, and there is nothing in the world I would not do to please you.”

Prince Ahmad, who loved her as sincerely as his words suggested, did not insist, and the fairy appeared satisfied with his submission. Still, as he could not abandon his idea completely, he took to telling her from time to time about the sultan’s great qualities, and about the tenderness he felt toward him, in the hope that she might finally give in.

As Prince Ahmad had guessed, the sultan of India was indeed suffering, in the midst of the wedding festivities, from the absence of his sons. It was not long before he learned of Prince Hussein’s decision to leave the world, and of the place he had chosen for his retreat. As a good father, for whom happiness consists in seeing the children he has produced, particularly when they prove worthy of his tenderness, he would have preferred to keep him at the court. Yet since he could not disapprove of the choice Hussein had made to seek perfection, he bore this privation with patience. He made every effort to obtain news of Prince Ahmad: Couriers were sent to every province of his realm, and governors were ordered to arrest him and force his return to the court. But his endeavors were in vain, and his sorrow only grew. Often he would confide in his grand vizier. “Vizier,” he said, “you know that Prince Ahmad is the son I love most tenderly, and you are not oblivious to the measures I have taken to find him, so far without success. The pain it has caused me will be my undoing, if you do not take pity on me. If you have any interest in preserving my life, I beg you, come to my rescue.”

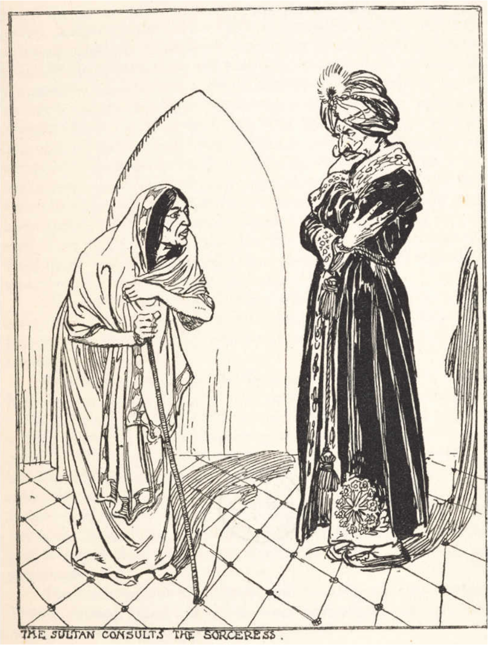
The grand vizier, no less attached to the sultan than he was diligent in the administration of the state, searching for some means to relieve his anxiety, remembered a witch whose reputation was excellent.[43] He proposed they consult her, and the sultan agreed. The grand vizier went to fetch her himself.

The sultan said to the witch, “You are no doubt aware of my grief for Prince Ahmad, who disappeared after the wedding of my son Prince Ali and my niece, Princess Nurunnihar. With your skills, could you not tell me what has become of him? Is he alive? Where is he? Doing what? Should I hope to see him again?”

“Majesty,” said the witch, “whatever my skills, I am unable to satisfy your request at this moment. But if you would allow me until tomorrow, I will have the answer then.” The sultan, granting her leave, sent her away with the promise of a reward if her response was in accordance with his wishes.

The witch returned the following day, and the grand vizier led her to the sultan for the second time. “Majesty, diligent as I was in applying the rules of my art, all that I could glean was that Prince Ahmad is not dead. Of that I can assure you, though his location escapes me.”

The sultan of India was obliged to make do with her response, which hardly stilled his worry over his son’s fate.


THE SULTAN CONSULTS THE SORCERESS.

The sultan consults the witch. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

As for Prince Ahmad, he spoke to the fairy Pari Banu so often about his father, without dwelling on his desire to see him, that she saw through his plan. As she had noted his restraint and his fear of displeasing her, after she had refused him, she inferred first that his love for her, which he never ceased to demonstrate in all their encounters, was sincere; and second, reflecting on the injustice of refusing a son’s request to honor his father, she resolved to grant him what he so clearly desired.[44]

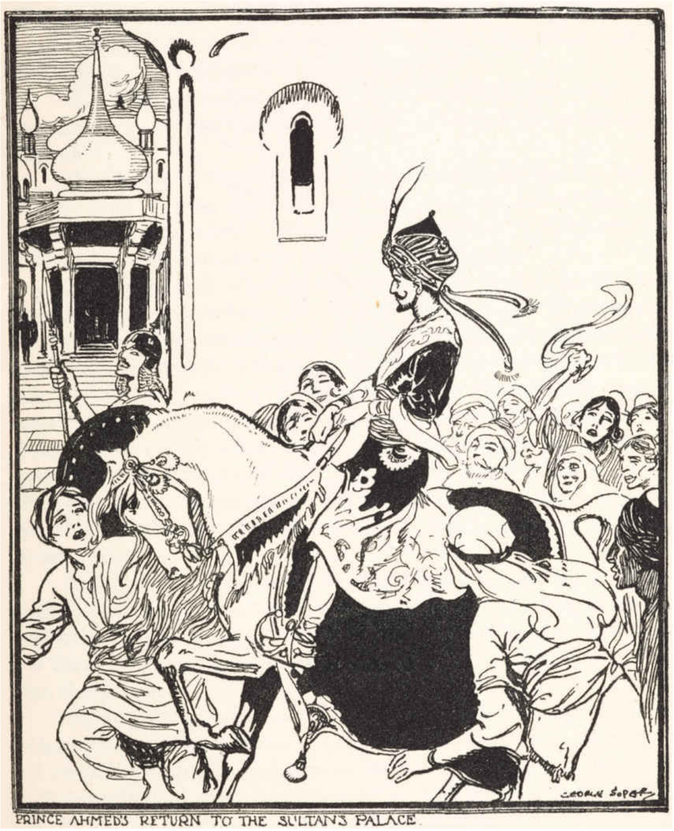
One day, she said, “Prince, your request to go see your father the sultan made me fear that you were faithless and wanted to leave me. That was the reason for my refusal. But now, convinced that you are constant, I have changed my mind, and I grant you my permission on the condition that your absence will not be long.”

Prince Ahmad wanted to throw himself at the fairy’s feet in gratitude, but she stopped him. “My queen,” he said, “your kindness is inestimable, but I lack the words to thank you as sincerely as I would like. I accept your condition all the more readily as I know it is not possible for me to live without you. I will go now, and when I return, you will know it was not out of fear, but a pure expression of my desire to live my whole life with you.”

Charmed by these words, Pari Banu was relieved of the suspicions she had formed about him. “Prince,” she said, “leave when you please, but first, do not be offended if I give you some advice on how you shall behave on your journey. First, I do not think it appropriate for you to tell your father the sultan about our marriage, nor what I am, nor where you have settled since leaving his side. Beg of him to be satisfied in knowing you are happy, that you desire nothing more, and let him know that the sole purpose of your visit is to put his mind at rest about your fate."

She appointed twenty horsemen, well mounted and well equipped, to go with him. When all was ready, Prince Ahmad kissed the fairy good-bye and renewed his promise to return soon. Then his horse, which was more beautiful and more richly harnessed than any in the sultan's stables, was brought to him. He mounted it gracefully, to the fairy's delight, and having bid her a last farewell, he rode away.

It was not a long way to his father's capital, and Prince Ahmad was quick to arrive. The people, overjoyed to see him again, received him with cheers, and a great crowd followed him to the sultan's apartments. The sultan received him and embraced him with joy, complaining at the same time, with fatherly tenderness, of the sorrow his absence had brought him. "I feared," he added, "that when fortune turned against you in favor of your brother Ali, you had given in to some desperate act."


PRINCE AHMED'S RETURN TO THE SULTAN'S PALACE
GEORGE SOPER

The people received Prince Ahmad with cheers. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

“Majesty,” said Prince Ahmad, “I will let you judge whether it were possible, having lost the only object of my desire, to endure the spectacle of Prince Ali’s happiness. If I had been capable of such an indignity, what would you have thought of my love? Love is a passion that cannot be abandoned at will:[45] It dominates, it masters, and it deprives the true lover of his reason. Your Majesty knows that when I shot my arrow, something amazing happened. On a plain as smooth and uniform as that of the horses, my arrow was nowhere to be found. Defeated by fortune, I lost no time protesting. To still my anxious mind, I left my men and returned alone to the plain to look for my arrow. I looked high and low, left and right from where the others had been found, in vain.

“Undaunted, I kept walking straight ahead. I had gone more than a league when I considered that it was impossible for my arrow to have traveled so far. I wondered whether I had lost my mind, and I thought of abandoning my quest. But when I resolved to turn around, something compelled me to press on, and after walking four more leagues to where the plain is bounded by rocks, I noticed an arrow. I picked it up and recognized it as mine, though it was so far from the time and place where it belonged. Far from thinking that Your Majesty had done me an injustice by deciding in favor of Prince Ali, I decided that some mystery was at work that I needed to clarify. This I did before very long, but its solution is another mystery,[46] and I hope you will forgive me if I do not disclose it, and I limit myself instead to assuring you of my happiness. As the only thing troubling this joy was the thought of your sorrow at my absence, I believed it was my duty to come and relieve you of it. All I ask of Your Majesty is the permission to come often to pay my respects and find out how you are."

"My son," answered the sultan of India, "I cannot refuse you this request, though I would much rather you resolved to stay with me. Tell me at least how I might send for you should you ever fail to come, or should your presence become necessary."

"Majesty," said the prince, "what you ask is part of the mystery I mentioned, and I beg your leave to remain silent on this point. I will acquit myself of my duty so frequently that I am afraid I will sooner be thought a nuisance than be accused of negligence."

The sultan of India did not insist.

"My son," he said, "I will intrude no more on your secrets. You could not have brought me greater joy than you have by your presence, and you shall always be welcome when you visit, without interrupting your business or pleasure."

Prince Ahmad stayed three days at the court of his father and left at dawn on the fourth. Pari Banu, having not expected him home so soon, was elated, and she blamed herself for having suspected him of faithlessness. She begged the prince's pardon. After that, the union between them was so perfect that each desired only what the other wanted.

A month after Prince Ahmad's return, as the fairy Pari Banu had observed that the prince, since giving her an account of his journey and his conversation with his father, had never talked of the sultan again, as though there were no such person in the world, where before he had spoken of him constantly, she thought he held back on her account. So one day she took the opportunity to say, “Prince, have you forgotten your father the sultan? Do you not remember your promise to go and see him often? I have not forgotten what you told me on your return, and I only remind you of it so that it may not be long before you acquit yourself of your promise.”

“Madame,” answered Prince Ahmad, “as I do not believe myself guilty of that wrong, I should much rather receive your reproach, without having deserved it, than risk your refusal in making a demand that it might have upset you to grant.”

“Prince,” said the fairy, “I would like you to banish such fears. In order that they do not arise again, and since a month has passed since you saw your father, I suggest that you leave no longer than a month between your visits. You may start tomorrow, and do the same every month, without having to mention it again.”

So Prince Ahmad went the next morning with the same attendants, but even finer, and himself more magnificently mounted, equipped, and dressed than before, and he was received by the sultan with the same joy and the same pleasure. For several months, he continued his visits, always in a finer and more dazzling equipage.

At last some viziers,[47] the sultan’s favorites, who judged Prince Ahmad’s power and grandeur by the figure he cut, abused their freedom by seeking to turn the sultan against his son. They advised him to find out where the prince had retreated to, and where his fortune came from—he who had neither title nor income, and who seemed to visit the court only to flaunt his riches—and they said they feared the prince would try to dethrone him.

The sultan of India, who was far from thinking Prince Ahmad capable of such a pernicious design as his favorites suggested, said to them, “You must be joking; my son loves me, and I am certain of his affection and loyalty, as I have given him no reason to be displeased.”

But the favorite vizier carried on with his suspicions until the sultan said, “Whatever you say, I do not believe that Prince Ahmad is as wicked as you wish me to believe, though I am grateful for your counsel and trust that it is given in good faith.”

The sultan did not let on that their words had left an impression on him and had alarmed him enough that he resolved to have Prince Ahmad watched, without the knowledge of his grand vizier. He sent for the witch, who, entering the palace by a secret door, was led straight to his cabinet.

"You told me the truth," he said, "when you assured me that my son Ahmad was not dead; now I ask for another favor. Now that I have found him and that he visits my court every month, I have not been able to discover where he lives, nor do I wish to force him to reveal his secret. But I believe you are skilled enough to satisfy my curiosity without alerting anyone. You know that he is here, and he likes to leave without warning, so go at once and follow him, and watch him well enough so as to discover where he lives."

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

Leaving the palace, and knowing where Prince Ahmad had found his arrow, the witch made straight for the rocks and hid there.

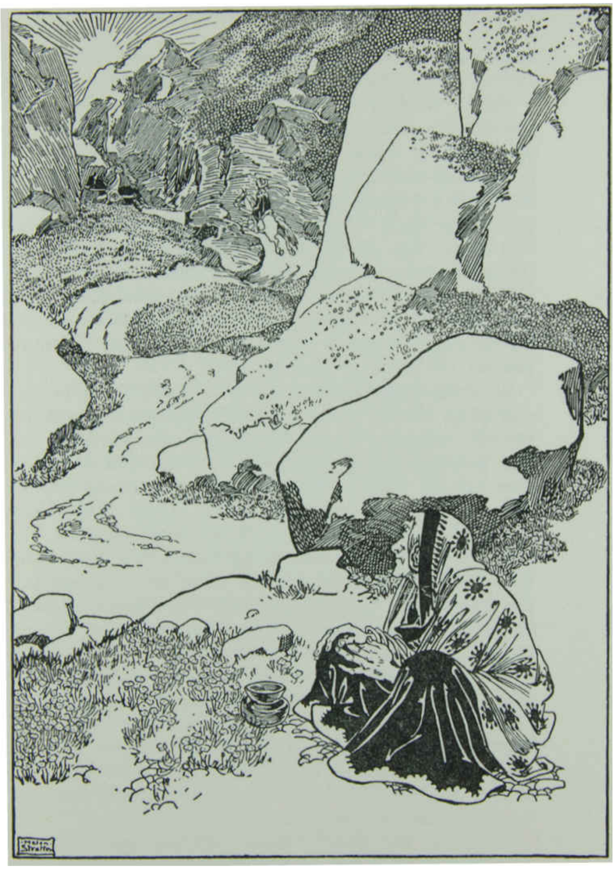
The following day, Prince Ahmad left the palace at dawn, without taking leave of the sultan or his courtiers, as was his custom. The witch saw him coming, and she followed him with her eyes until she lost sight of him and his attendants.

Since the rocks were too craggy to scale, the witch judged that one of two things had happened: The prince had slipped into either a cave or the underground home of some fairy or jinn. She emerged from her hiding place and went straight to the hollow where she had seen them disappear, and though she followed it to the end, looking on all sides and even retracing her steps, she could see no opening, not even the iron gate that had presented itself to Prince Ahmad, since it was visible only to men, and only to those whose presence was agreeable to the fairy Pari Banu.

The witch, who realized it was vain for her to search any longer, was obliged to be satisfied with the discovery she had made, and she went back to relate it to the sultan.

“Majesty,” she added to her story, “as you shall see, it will be no trouble for me to satisfy your curiosity about Prince Ahmad’s behavior. I will not reveal my intentions at present, and I will ask only for time and patience and the permission to carry out my plan without further questions.”

The sultan agreed. “You are your own mistress. Go, and do whatever you think is right. I will patiently await the result of your promise.” To encourage the witch, he presented her with a diamond of great value.



The witch waited at the foot of the rock for Prince Ahmad. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912).*

Since Prince Ahmad had obtained the fairy Pari Banu’s permission to go to his father’s court once a month, he never failed in his duty. The witch, who knew this, waited for the month to end. A day or two beforehand, she went to the foot of the rock, where she had lost sight of the prince and his men, and waited there to carry out her plan.

The very next day, Prince Ahmad came out through the iron door with his attendants. He met the witch, not knowing what she was, and saw her lying with her head against the rock. Since she seemed to be suffering, compassion moved him to ask her what was wrong, and what he could do to help.

The crafty witch,[48] without raising her head, but eyeing the prince in such a way as to stir his pity, answered with some effort, as though she struggled to breathe, that she was on her way to town but had been struck by fever, which had forced her to stop there, far from any dwelling, with no hope of assistance.

“Good woman,” replied the prince, “you are not as far from help as you imagine. I am ready to assist you, and will take you to a nearby place where you will receive care and soon be cured. You need only get up and let one of my men take you behind him.”

At these words, the witch, only feigning sickness in order to know where the prince lived, did not refuse his kindness. She made many vain attempts to rise, pretending that the violence of her illness prevented her from doing so. At last, two of the prince’s aides helped her up, and sat her behind another. They mounted their horses again and followed the prince back to the iron gate, which one of his men had opened. He entered, and when he arrived in the fairy’s courtyard, without alighting from his horse, he sent for her.

The fairy Pari Banu, not knowing what had brought the prince back so soon, appeared at once. Without giving her time to ask him the reason, the prince pointed to the witch, who had just touched the ground and was held up by two of his men, and said, “My lady, please show this woman pity. I found her in this state and promised her the help she needs. I have brought her to you, convinced that out of your own kindness, as well as my plea, you will not abandon her.”

The fairy Pari Banu, who kept her eyes on the supposed invalid all the time Prince Ahmad spoke, ordered two of her women to take her from the men who held her, lead her into an apartment of the palace, and give her the same care they would give their mistress.

While the two women did as they were told, Pari Banu went to Prince Ahmad and whispered in his ear.

"Prince," she said, "I admire your compassion, but forgive me for saying that I fear your good intentions may be badly rewarded. I do not believe this woman is as sick as she pretends to be, and unless I am very much mistaken she has been sent here to cause you trouble. But do not let it worry you. Be assured that I will deliver you of all the snares that might be laid for you. Go and pursue your journey."

Prince Ahmad was not alarmed. "My lady," he said, "as I do not remember ever having hurt a soul, and have no wish to harm anyone, I cannot believe anyone might wish me ill. Whatever the case, I shall continue to do good whenever I have the chance." He took leave of the fairy and went his way again, and soon he and his attendant had arrived at the sultan's court. His father received him in the usual way, trying hard not to betray the doubts his courtiers had planted in his mind.

Meanwhile, the two women carried the witch into a sumptuous apartment. First they sat her on a sofa, where she rested on cushions of gold brocade, while they made a bed for her with satin quilts, sheets of finest linen, and a cloth of gold. When they had helped her into bed (the witch continued to feign helplessness), one of the women left the room and returned soon after with a china jug full of a certain liquor. She presented it to the witch as the other woman helped her to sit up.

"Drink this liquor," she said. "It is the water of the Fountain of Lions, a remedy against all fevers.[49] You will see its effect in less than an hour."

The witch, dissembling, feigned repulsion and had to be persuaded many times to drink. At last, she took the china jug, and, shaking her head in disgust, swallowed the liquor. When she was prone again, the women covered her.

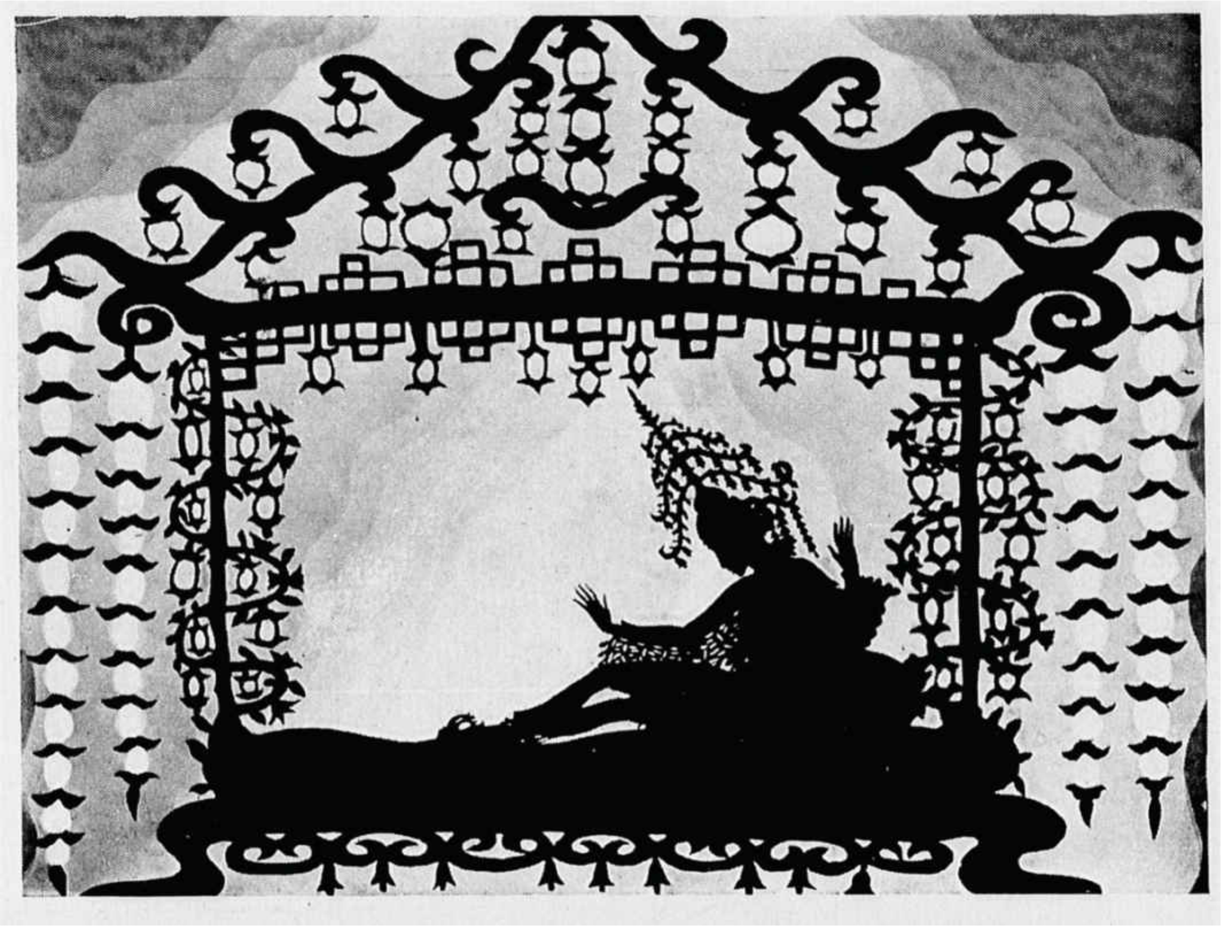
"Rest," said the woman who had brought the potion, "and get a little sleep. We will leave you now, and we hope to find you cured when we return in an hour."

The witch, who had not intended to feign sickness for this long, but only long enough to discover Prince Ahmad’s dwelling place, wanted to declare straightaway that the potion had had its effect, so eager was she to go back and tell the sultan of her success. But, as she had been told that the potion took its time to work, she had to wait.

The two women came back when they said they would, and they found the witch up and dressed on the sofa. Rising to greet them, she said, “Oh, admirable potion! It worked its cure much sooner than you predicted, and I have been waiting impatiently for you to lead me to your mistress, so that I may thank her for her kindness and be on my way.”

The women, who were fairies like their mistress, told the witch how happy they were to see her cured. Then they led her through several apartments, all more splendid than the one where she had lain, into a vast room, the grandest of the palace.

In this room sat Pari Banu on a throne of solid gold,[50] inlaid with diamonds, rubies, and pearls of an amazing size, attended on each side by a great number of fairies, all beautiful and richly clothed. At this sight, the witch was so astonished that, having bowed low before the throne, she could not even open her lips to thank the fairy, as she had intended. Pari Banu came to her aid and said, “Good woman, I am glad I had the chance to help you, and to see you are able to pursue your journey. I will not detain you, but before you leave, you may wish to see my palace. Follow my women; they will show you the way.”



The character of Pari Banu plays an important role in Lotte Reiniger's film The Adventures of Prince Achmed *(1926), but the animated Pari Banu displays little of the confidence and power of the* Nights *fairy princess. Mixing together different story elements from the* Arabian Nights, *Reiniger places Pari Banu in a series of perilous situations from which her prince must rescue her.*

Still amazed, the witch bowed again at the foot of the throne and, lacking the strength to say a single word, let herself be carried away by the two fairies. She was taken through the same apartments that had been shown to Prince Ahmad, continually exclaiming in delight, and when she had seen the entire palace, the fairies informed her that what she had seen was only a glimpse of their mistress's grandeur, that her realm had countless other palaces, all different and no less splendid. Then they led her to the iron gate, opened it, and wished her a safe journey as she thanked them for their trouble.

After she had taken a few steps, the witch turned to look at the door, in vain: It had become invisible to her. Apart from this detail, she was pleased with the success of her mission, and she hurried to tell the sultan. Once in the capital, she took the side streets and entered the palace through the secret door. The sultan, alerted to her arrival, called her in, and, seeing that she was downcast, judged that she had not succeeded. “It seems,” he said, “that your journey has been useless, and that you have not brought me the news I hoped for.”

The witch related to the sultan how, feigning illness, she had stirred Prince Ahmad’s pity, and how he had taken her into that underground place and introduced her to a fairy whose beauty was like nothing in the world. She told him of the care she had received from the fairies, which she judged could only have sprung from a wife’s consideration for her husband. The witch was careful to relay her amazement at the sight of the palace, and her gratitude to the fairies who had given her the potion, and the swift recovery that had followed—which was as feigned as her illness, though she did not doubt the potion’s virtues—and the majesty of the fairy on her throne all decked with jewels, and all the other riches in the palace.

“Majesty,” she continued, “what do you make of the fairy’s riches? Perhaps you feel nothing but delight, and pleasure at the good fortune of your son. As for me, I beg Your Majesty’s forgiveness for thinking otherwise, indeed for admitting that I am horrified to consider the trouble that lies in store. I believe that Prince Ahmad, being naturally good, is incapable of plotting anything against Your Majesty. But who can say that the fairy, with her charms and the control she has already gained over her husband’s mind, will not move him to act against you, and try to rob you of your crown?”

Convinced though he was of Prince Ahmad’s good heart, the sultan could not help but be struck by the witch’s words.[51] Waving her away, he said, “I thank you for the pains you have taken and for your advice. I understand your concerns and will have to ponder them in council.”

The sultan, who had been with his courtiers when the witch arrived, returned to them and related his concern that the fairy might turn the prince against him, and asked them how he might prevent it.

One favorite spoke for them all. “Since the possible author of such a disaster is known to Your Majesty, and that he happens to be at your court, you should not hesitate to have him arrested—not to have him killed (that would attract too much attention), but at least to keep him in a narrow jail for the rest of his days."

The other favorites applauded him as one.

The witch, who found such measures too violent,[52] suggested otherwise.

"Majesty," she said, "I am sure that your councilors speak only out of concern for your interests. But I hope they will forgive me for pointing out that if you arrest the prince, you will also have to arrest his entourage, who are jinn. Do they suppose arresting them would be an easy matter? Would the jinn not make themselves invisible, and hurry to inform the fairy of the injury done to her husband? And would she not seek revenge? Would it not be wiser to discover the prince's intentions by other means? As jinn and fairies are capable of superhuman feats, flatter Prince Ahmad by requesting that he procure for you all kinds of wonderful things with the fairy's help. For example, every time Your Majesty goes into the field, you are obliged to incur enormous expenses, not only for pavilions and tents for your army but also for mules and camels and other beasts of burden. Could you not engage the prince to use his favor with the fairy to procure you a tent that might fit in a man's hand[53] yet would still be large enough to shelter your whole army? Should the prince manage to obtain such a tent, you could then multiply your requests until neither he nor the fairy would be able to satisfy them. Then, ashamed at his impotence, he will no longer dare to appear at your court and will be forced into isolation, and Your Majesty will have nothing more to fear from him."

When the witch had finished, the sultan asked his favorites whether they had anything better to propose. Finding them all silent, he resolved to follow the witch's advice, as it was the most reasonable and most suited to his gentle government.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The following day, Prince Ahmad was brought before his father. “My son,” said the sultan, “when you came here to relieve me of my grief, you kept your dwelling place a mystery, and I, being happy only to see you and learn that you were well, did not seek to uncover your secret. I cannot think what moved you to withhold the source of your happiness from your father, who would only have wanted to share it. I know now where your happiness lies, and I can only celebrate your marriage to a fairy so blessed with charms and riches, as I am told she is. Powerful as I am, I would not have been able to procure you such a marriage. Now that you have risen to such heights, which any father other than yours might have envied, I ask only that you continue to honor and respect me, as you have always done, and also to use your favor with your fairy to obtain her assistance whenever I may need it, as I do today. You are well aware of the great expense my generals and I incur, to say nothing of the trouble, every time we have to go to war, in order to supply ourselves with tents and pavilions, and the beasts to transport them. If you make a point of the pleasure it would bring me, I am sure you could easily obtain from her a tent that would fit in a man’s hand yet would still allow my entire army to take shelter. She would certainly not refuse out of impotence; everyone knows fairies are capable of even more wonderful things.”

Prince Ahmad never expected that his father would have asked for such a thing, which seemed to him very difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, though he had heard of the powers of fairies and jinn, he doubted they extended far enough to include the kind of tent his father had described. He had, so far, never asked anything of Pari Banu, contenting himself with her constant signs of affection, to which he always responded in kind, with no other purpose than that of remaining in her favor. He did not know how to reply.

“Majesty,” he said at last, “I have kept my mystery a secret, only because it did not seem important to inform you. I do not know how it came to be revealed to you, but I cannot deny that what you have heard is true. I am married to the fairy you were told about. I love her and am persuaded that she also loves me. But as for the favor that you believe I enjoy, I have nothing to say, since not only have I not put it to use, the thought has not even occurred to me, and I would much rather Your Majesty asked nothing of me and let me love. And yet a father's wish is a son's command,[54] so, with the greatest reluctance, I will undertake to put your request to my wife, though I cannot promise it will be satisfied. And should I cease to have the honor of coming here to pay my respects, it will be a sign that I have not succeeded, so I beg your pardon in advance and ask you to consider that you yourself will have reduced me to that state."

"My son," replied the sultan, "I would be sorry if what I ask of you should cause me the grief of never seeing you again. I see that you are unaware of the power a husband has over a wife.[55] Yours would show that she loves you very feebly if she, who has the powers of a fairy, should refuse you such a small request as the one I put to you. Be bold: All you have to fear is that you are not loved as deeply as you love. Go, ask, and you will see that the fairy loves you more than you imagine. Consider that, just as you would not refuse any request of hers, she will not refuse yours."

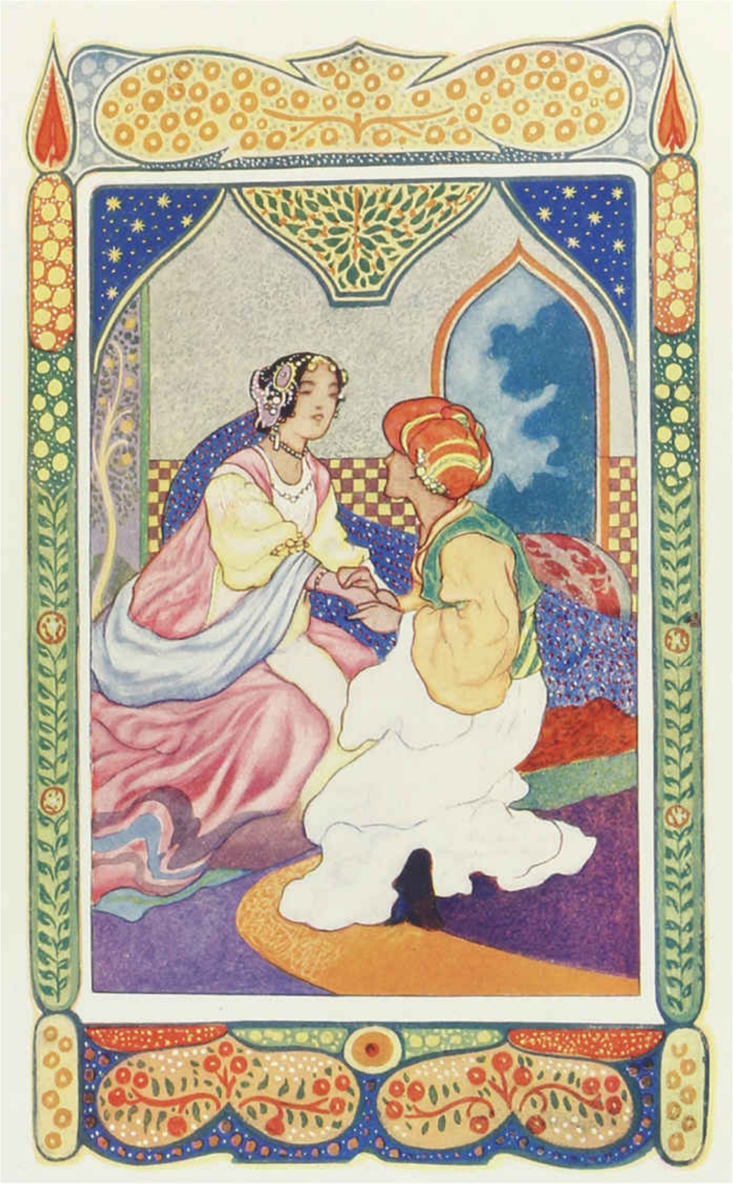
Prince Ahmad was unconvinced. He would much sooner have been asked anything else than run the risk of offending his dear Pari Banu. The thought made him so sad that he left the court two days earlier than usual. The fairy, who had always seen him arrive with a smile, pressed him to reveal what was the matter. But he evaded her and asked after her health instead, until she said, "I will answer your questions once you have answered mine."

The prince insisted it was nothing, but this only fed her resolve.

"I cannot bear," she said, "to see you in this state without knowing the cause of your sadness, so that I may dispel it, whatever it may be. Only something extraordinary could be beyond my powers, unless you are suffering from the death of your father the sultan, in which case I would do what I could, and time would do the rest."

Prince Ahmad could resist no longer. "My lady," he cried, "God protect the life of my father the sultan, and bless him to the end of his days! I left him in perfect health; that is not what saddens me. The sultan himself is the cause, and, what is worse, he has put me in the unhappy position of being a burden on you.[56] First, you know how carefully I have concealed our happiness from him, as you instructed. I cannot think how he found out."

"I can," said the fairy. "Remember what I said about the woman who came here pretending to be ill, the one on whom you took pity? It is she who told the sultan what you had tried to hide. I warned you she was no more ill than you and I. She has proven me right. After my women had given her a remedy to drink, though she did not need it, she pretended it had cured her, and she wanted to take her leave of me at once to report what she had found. She was in such a hurry that she would have left without seeing my palace, had I not impressed on her that it had to be seen. But go on, and let us see what it is you call a burden."



Pari Banu and Prince Ahmad. Illustration by Charles Robinson from The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Perie Banou: From the Arabian Nights Entertainments *(London, 1915)*

“My lady,” said the prince, “you may have observed that until now, content with your love, I have never asked you any other favor. What more could I possibly desire? It is not that I am unaware of your powers, only that I promised myself never to take advantage of them. I beg you to consider, then, that it is not I, but my father, who had the boldness to request from you a pavilion large enough to shelter him, his court, and all his troops from violent weather when they are at war—and yet one that a man could carry in his hand. Remember that it is not I asking this favor, but the sultan."

"Prince," replied the fairy, smiling, "I am sorry that so small a matter should have troubled you as much as it would seem. I see that your sorrow has two sources. One is the rule you have set yourself to be content with my love for you, and to abstain from the slightest demand on my powers. The other, though you will deny it, is the belief that your father's request exceeded those powers. I commend you for the first, and I would love you even more if it were possible. As for the second, I will have no difficulty showing you that what the sultan wants is nothing, and that I am capable of far greater feats. So put your mind at rest, and know that, far from being a burden, any demand of yours would be my greatest pleasure to perform."

The fairy called her treasurer, who came at once. "Nurgihan," said the fairy, for that was the treasurer's name, "bring me the largest pavilion in my treasury."

Nurgihan returned soon afterward with the pavilion, which she could not only hold in her hand but even conceal by closing her fingers. She presented it to her mistress, who gave it to Prince Ahmad to hold.

When Prince Ahmad saw the pavilion that Pari Banu called the largest in her treasury, he thought she meant to mock him, and the look of surprise appeared on his face. Pari Banu burst out laughing.

"What! Prince," she cried, "do you think I am teasing you? You will see now that I mean no such thing. Nurgihan," she said to her treasurer, taking the tent from Prince Ahmad's hands, "go and set it up, so that the prince may judge whether it is large enough for his father the sultan."

The treasurer left the fairy's palace and carried the tent a long way off, so that when she had set it up, one end reached the palace wall. Prince Ahmad, who had thought it small, now saw it was large enough to shelter two armies, each greater than that of his father, and he said to Pari Banu, "I ask a thousand pardons for my doubt. After what I have seen, I believe there is nothing you cannot do."

"As you see," said the fairy, "the pavilion is larger than what your father may need, but it has the property of growing or shrinking,[57] according to the size of the army it shelters."

The treasurer took down the tent, brought it back to size, and gave it to Prince Ahmad, who, without staying another day, mounted his horse and went with his attendants to present it to his father.

The sultan, who believed there could be no such thing as the tent that he had asked for, was astonished. He took the tent and, having admired its smallness, he struggled to contain himself when he saw it set up on the plain, and he found it large enough to shelter an army twice as large as any he could bring into the field.

The sultan of India made a show of gratitude for such a splendid present and asked his son to thank the fairy on his behalf, and, to drive home the point, he had the pavilion carefully stored in his treasury. But inside, he felt a sharper jealousy[58] than that which his courtiers had roused in him, when he considered that whatever his own majesty and wealth, his son was now capable, with the fairy's help, of things infinitely beyond his own powers. More determined than ever to do away with his son, he consulted the witch, and the witch advised him to engage the prince to bring him water from the Fountain of Lions.[59]

That evening, he addressed Prince Ahmad. "My son," he said, "I have already expressed to you my gratitude for the gift of the tent you have procured for me, which I consider the most precious piece in all my treasury. But you must do one more thing for me. I am informed that the fairy, your wife, makes use of a certain water from the Fountain of Lions, which cures even the most dangerous fevers. As I am sure my health is dear to you, I do not doubt that you will ask her for a bottle of that water and bring it to me so that I may use it as medicine. Do me this favor, and complete the duty of a son toward his father."

Prince Ahmad, who had believed that his father would content himself with the rare pavilion he had brought him, and that he would not make any more demands that might strain his bond with Pari Banu, was confounded by this new request, despite his wife's assurance to grant him anything that was in her power to provide.

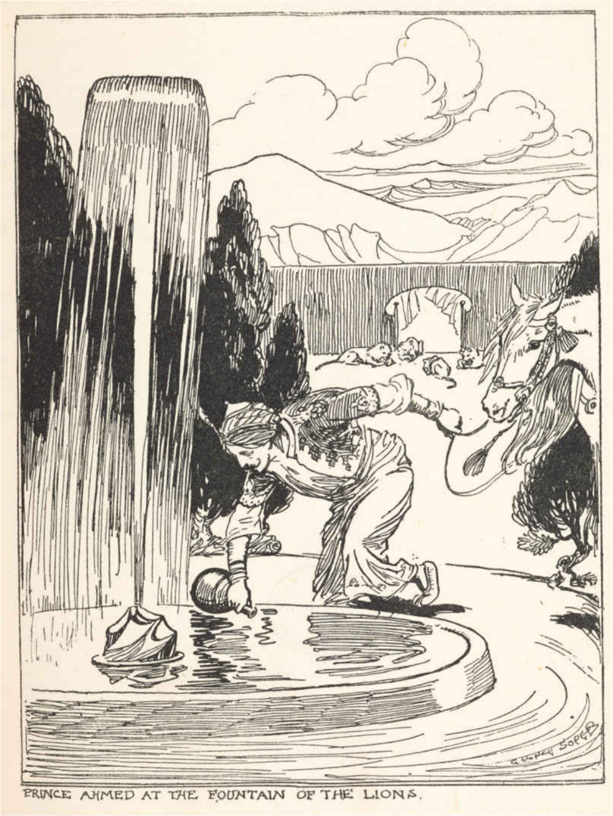
"Majesty," he said after a moment, "I beg you to believe that there is nothing I would not undertake to try to prolong your life. But I would like to do so without my wife's intervention, and for this reason I cannot promise you the water you desire. All I can do is assure you that I will ask for it, with the same risk to my happiness as I took for the pavilion."

The following day, Prince Ahmad returned to Pari Banu and described his delivery of the tent to his father, who was grateful, and then he related the new demand he had received. "My lady," he added, "I tell you this as a true account of what happened between my father and me. As for the rest, only you can decide whether to satisfy his wish or reject it. It makes no difference to me: I only want what you want."

"No, no," replied Pari Banu. "I am pleased that the sultan of India understands how much I feel for you. I want to please him, but there is malice in this request, as you will understand by what I will explain to you. The Fountain of Lions stands in the middle of a court in a great castle, the entrance to which is guarded by four ferocious lions, two of which sleep while the other two are awake. But do not let that frighten you: I will tell you how to pass them without danger."

The fairy Pari Banu happened to be at work on her knitting, and, as she had several balls of thread beside her, she took one, handed it to Prince Ahmad, and said, "First take this ball of thread.[60] I will tell you in a moment how to use it. Second, you must have two horses: one you will ride yourself, the other you will lead. It must be loaded with a sheep cut into quarters, killed today. Third, you must carry a bottle, which I will give you, to hold the water. Set out early tomorrow morning, and when you have passed the iron gate, throw the ball of thread before you. It will roll until it reaches the gates of the castle. Follow it, and when it stops, the gates will be open, and you will see the four lions. The two that are awake will, by their roaring, wake the other two, but do not be frightened. Throw each of them a quarter of mutton without touching the ground, then dig in your spurs and ride to the fountain, fill your bottle without dismounting, and return at the same speed. The lions will be so busy eating they will leave you free to go."

Prince Ahmad left the next morning at the hour set by the fairy, and he followed her directions to the letter. When he arrived at the castle gates, he threw the quarters of mutton to the four lions, and, bravely riding past them, reached the fountain, filled his bottle, and left the castle as safely as he had entered. When he had gone a little distance, he turned back and saw two of the lions coming after him. He calmly drew his saber and prepared to fight. But he saw one of them turn and indicate, with his head and tail, that he meant no harm but only sought to go ahead of him, and the other stayed behind to follow, so he put his sword back in its sheath. In this way, he reached the capital flanked by the lions, which did not leave him until they had led him to the gates of the sultan's palace. Then they returned the same way they had come, frightening all those who saw them, though they walked with total gentleness and showed no threat.


GEORGE SOPER
PRINCE AHMED AT THE FOUNTAIN OF THE LIONS.

Prince Ahmad filled his bottle at the Fountain of Lions. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

Many officers came to meet Prince Ahmad as he arrived, and they led him to the sultan's apartment, where he sat surrounded by his favorites. The prince approached the throne, laid the bottle at the sultan's feet, kissed the rich fabric that covered his footstool, and rose.

"I have brought you the water," he said, "which your Majesty desired to keep among your other precious things. I hope you never need it."

“My son,” said the sultan, “I am indebted to you for this present, and for the great danger you have faced on my account (he knew this from the witch, who was familiar with the Fountain of Lions and its risks). But do me the pleasure of telling me by what skill, by what incredible power you have returned alive.”

“Majesty,” replied Prince Ahmad, “I have no share in the compliment you pay me; it is entirely due to my wife the fairy. I deserve no other credit than to have followed her advice.” He related his adventure and explained how he had carried out his task. Then the sultan, who had listened with all the demonstrations of great joy but secretly became more jealous, rose and retired into a chamber, where he sent for the witch.

The witch arrived and spared the sultan the trouble of telling her about Prince Ahmad’s journey. She had heard of it before she came and was ready with a plan, which she communicated to the sultan, who proposed it to the prince the next day.

“My son,” he said, “I have one more thing to ask of you, after which I shall expect nothing more from your obedience or your favor with your wife. Bring me a man no taller than a foot and a half,[61] with a beard thirty feet long, who carries on his shoulders an iron bar of five hundred pounds, and who can speak.”

Prince Ahmad, who did not believe that such a man existed in the world, longed to be excused from the task, but the sultan insisted and told him that the fairy could do things more amazing still.

The next day, the prince returned to the underground kingdom and put to Pari Banu his father’s new demand, which he considered even more unlikely than the first two.

“I cannot believe,” he said, “that there is such a man. No doubt my father means to see if I am such a fool as to go out looking for one, or he has a mind to ruin me. How can he suppose that I will find a man so strong and yet so small? What weapons might I use to bend him to my will? If there is a way, I beg you to help me find it.”

“Prince,” said the fairy, “do not be alarmed. You took a risk in fetching water from the Fountain of Lions, but you will have no trouble finding this man. He is my brother Shaybar, but he is nothing like me, though we share the same father. His nature is so violent[62] that nothing can prevent his giving bloody expression to his anger for a slight offense. The rest of the time, he is an angel, and he is always happy to oblige anyone in whatever they desire. He is made exactly as your father has described him, and he is unarmed except for an iron bar of five hundred pounds, without which he never moves, and which earns him respect. I will send for him, and you shall judge if what I say is true. Prepare yourself to be frightened at his sight."

"My queen," replied Prince Ahmad, "if Shaybar is your brother, that is enough to make me love him, however ugly and disfigured he may be."

The fairy ordered a gold incense burner full of fire[63] to be brought to the porch of her palace, along with a casket of the same metal, out of which she took a little perfume that she threw into the fire. There rose a cloud of smoke.

"See," said the fairy, "there comes my brother. Do you see him?"

At once the prince caught sight of Shaybar, who really was no taller than a foot and a half. He approached gravely, with a heavy bar across his shoulders, a long beard that jutted out before him, and a thick mustache that crept across his face and was tucked behind his ears. His piggish eyes were set deep in a giant head covered with a pointy cap. On top of all this, he had a hump on his back and one on his front.[64]

If Prince Ahmad had not known that Shaybar was the fairy's brother, he could not have stood the sight of him, but, taking comfort in this knowledge, he stood by the fairy without the slightest sign of fright.

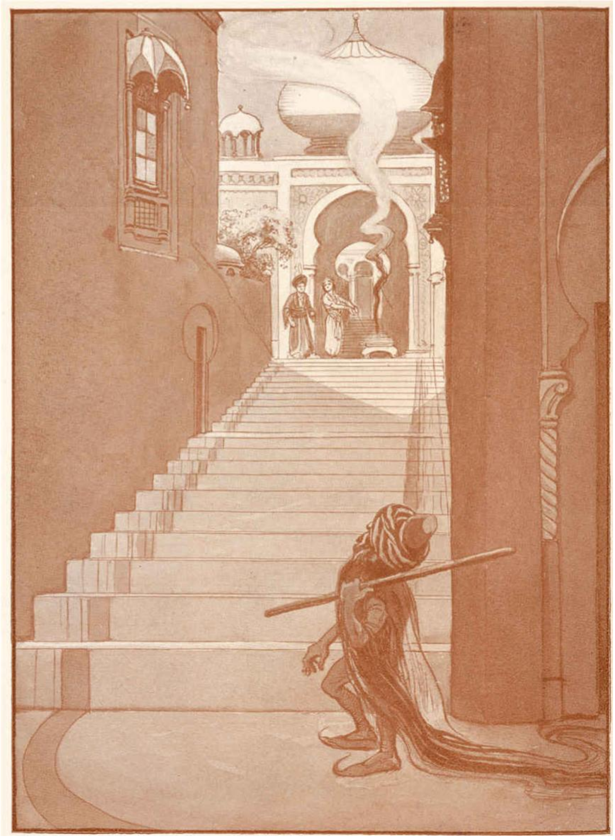
Shaybar came forward, gave the prince a look that should have chilled his blood, and asked the fairy, when he reached her, who that man was.

"Brother," she replied, "he is my husband. His name is Ahmad, and he is the sultan of India's son. If I did not invite you to our wedding, it is because I did not wish to call you back from the expedition you were embarked upon. I was pleased to learn that you returned victorious, so I have taken the liberty to call for you now."

At these words, Shaybar looked on Prince Ahmad with a kinder eye, which did nothing to soften his fierce air, and said, "Is there any way, Sister,[65] that I might be of service to him? That he is your husband is enough to commit me to do for him whatever he desires."

“His father the sultan,” replied the fairy, “is curious to see you. Let Ahmad be your guide to the sultan’s court.”

“He need only lead the way,” said Shaybar.



Pari Banu sends for her brother Shaibar (Shaybar). Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

“Brother,” replied Pari Banu, “it is too late to go today. Put it off till tomorrow, and in the meantime, I will tell you all that has passed between the sultan of India and Prince Ahmad since our marriage.”

The next morning, after Shaybar had been informed of the matter, he and Prince Ahmad set out for the capital. When they arrived, the people, on seeing Shaybar at the gates, ran and hid in their shops and locked themselves in their houses. Those who fled expressed their fear to all they met, who ran with them without turning to look, so as Shaybar and Prince Ahmad went along, they found all the streets empty. At the palace, too, the porters fled from the gates and ran away, so Ahmad and Shaybar arrived without resistance at the council hall, where the sultan was holding an audience on his throne. Here too, the ushers, at Shaybar's approach, abandoned their posts and let them enter without hindrance.

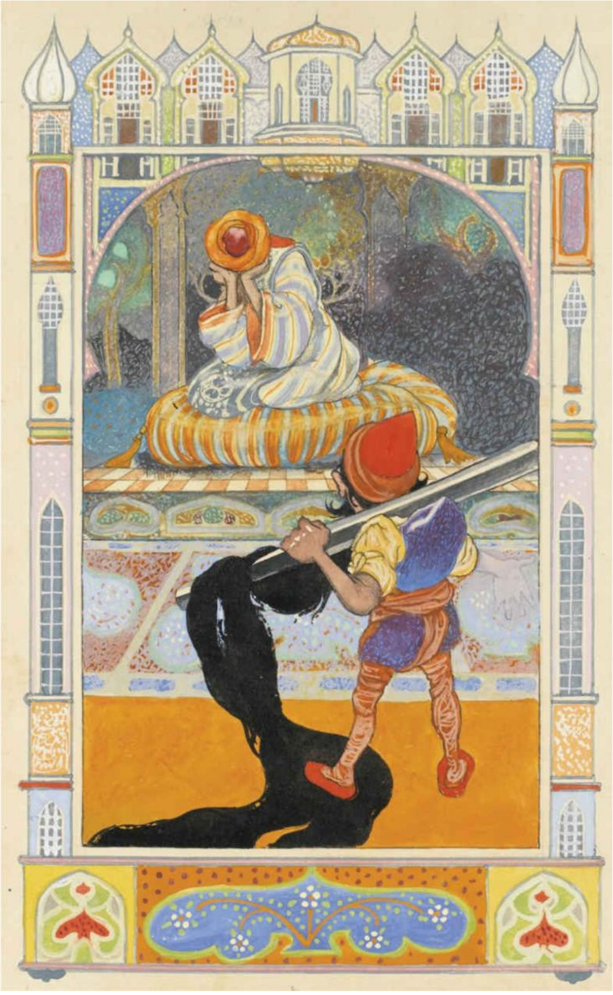
Shaybar, head high, went boldly to the throne without waiting for an introduction.

"You called for me,"[66] he said to the sultan. "Here I am. What do you want from me?"

But the sultan only threw his hands up to his eyes to avoid the hideous sight. Inflamed by such a hostile welcome, after he had taken the trouble to come so far, Shaybar lifted his iron bar, cried out "Speak!" and brought it down on the sultan's head, killing him before Prince Ahmad could intervene. All that Ahmad could do was to stop him from murdering the grand vizier, who sat beside him, on the grounds that he had always given his father good advice.

"Then these are the men," said Shaybar, "who turned his mind against you."

He lunged at all the other viziers, the flatterers and favorites of the sultan, Ahmad's enemies. Everyone he struck, he killed, and none escaped but those who were not frozen with fear and saved themselves by fleeing.



The sultan threw his hands up to his eyes to avoid the hideous sight. Illustration by Charles Robinson from The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Perie Banou *(1915).*

When the massacre was over, Shaybar came out of the council hall and into the courtyard with the iron bar upon his shoulder. To the grand vizier, who owed his life to Prince Ahmad, he said, “I know there is a witch who is more hostile to my brother-in-law than all the lowly courtiers I have punished. Bring her to me.”

The grand vizier sent for her at once. She came, and as he brought down his iron bar, Shaybar said, “This will teach you not to give bad advice and feign sickness.” The witch died on the spot.

“This is not yet enough,” he said. “I will do the same to the whole town if they do not recognize Prince Ahmad, my brother-in-law, as their king and the sultan of India.”

Everyone who heard him made the air ring with their cries: “Long live our Sultan Ahmad!” Before long, the whole town joined them in chorus. Shaybar dressed the prince in royal robes, sat him on the throne, and after he had made the people swear their loyalty to him, he went and fetched his sister Pari Banu, who arrived in splendor and was crowned Sultana of the Indies.

As for Prince Ali and Princess Nurunnihar, since they had no hand in the conspiracy against Prince Ahmad and knew nothing of it, Prince Ahmad gave them a vast province and its capital to rule, and there they spent the rest of their days. He also sent an officer to Prince Hussein to inform him of the change and offer him a province. But Prince Hussein felt himself so happy in his solitude[67] that he sent the officer back to his brother with thanks for the kindness, assuring him of his submission and saying that the only favor he desired from him was permission to live undisturbed in the place where he had chosen to withdraw.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

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1. Also see notes from Hanna Diyab’s original version of this story in Part III.

2. *the throne of India:* Diyab sets the opening of this story in India, and Galland follows his geography while providing additional details for locations and settings.

3. *The princess was remarkably beautiful:* The description of the princess seems to have been an addition by Galland, who is fond of reading “nobility of spirit” in the beautiful visages of his characters.

4. *he noticed that the three princes:* In Diyab’s story, the sultan did not plan to marry his niece to a neighboring prince until he found out that his sons were all in love with her. Galland intervenes here to contextualize the story through his knowledge of statesmanship. Robert Irwin (see

“Afterword”) notes that an Indian story cycle in the *Ocean of Streams of Stories* (*Katha Sarit Sagara*), from the eleventh century, contains another tale of a flying carpet and three men competing to marry the same woman.

5. *“the most extraordinary find”:* At the heart of this test is a fascination with rare and fabulous objects, and this plot is a natural fit with the interests of Diyab, who had spent a year in the company of a French collector of curiosities. Paul Lucas’s apartment, where Diyab had taken up residence in Paris, was filled with medallions, coins, engraved stones, precious gems, and sculptures brought from Persia, Greece, and the Levant (*Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 17–18). Galland, also a collector of coins and valuable manuscripts, would have easily understood the spirit of this tale. An echo of the sultan’s quest for an extraordinary object can be found in an Icelandic legend in which a king sends three princes on a journey to find “the finest thing” to decide who will marry the princess. Ulrich Marzolph believes that it was derived from the story crafted by Diyab and Galland as it entered oral folklore traditions in Europe (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 105–7).

6. *each dressed like a merchant:* The princes each adopt the disguise of a merchant, which fits the mercantile spirit of this story collection. Even Caliph Harun al-Rashid walks among his people in the guise of a merchant in the tales of the *Nights*.

7. *the wonders of Bisnagar:* The notes from Diyab’s oral performance of this story suggest that he mentioned only a “principal city of India” as the destination of Prince Hussein. It was probably Galland who positioned the first prince’s adventure in Bisnagar. The Vijayanagara Empire was established in 1336 in the Deccan Plateau of southern India. Bisnagar was the name the Portuguese gave to this land.

8. *the quarter where he found himself:* Prince Hussein finds himself in a city defined by trade and finds lodging in a khan that caters to traveling merchants. In his oral storytelling, Diyab seems to have emphasized the magnificence and beauty of the khan where Hussein stays, but Galland prefers to elaborate on the description of the city’s market and the range of goods available there. The shops were organized according to their specialization, and the covered narrow streets reflect the souqs of Aleppo, where Diyab was raised.

9. *stocked with fine linens from all over India:* The elaborate description of the goods available in the marketplace resonates with the description at the beginning of “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.” In that earlier story, the goods seem to have been sourced largely from Syria, Iraq, and Iran, but in this story from Galland and Diyab, the markets of Bisnagar reflect its significance within wider Asian trading networks. The ports of the Vijayanagara Empire were visited by ships from China, and Indian traders regularly shipped to Red Sea ports. Overland routes to Persia were also active. This elaborate list of the wonders of the marketplace (which includes the extensive fabric production of India in the period before British colonization) may have been sparked by Diyab’s interest in trade goods of the region, but it was likely filled out with the scholarly knowledge of Galland.

10. *pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds:* This list of precious stones is repeated often in the tales added to the *Arabian Nights* by Galland and Diyab. It is unclear whose favorite formula it is, but it also appears in Diyab’s memoir, written forty years after his stay in Paris.

11. *he wanted thirty purses:* This is an extravagant sum, considering that in Diyab's time such a "purse" of Ottoman coins was considered to be worth 500 *écus*.

12. *"will be transported wherever he wishes to be":* This is the first time a magic carpet appears in the stories of the *Arabian Nights*, and some have attributed it to the French translator. There are, however, other examples of magical modes of flight in the story collection: the flying sofa in the tale of "Aladdin of the Beautiful Moles" and the flying vase of the sorceress in "The Tale of Hasan of Basra." Moreover, Robert Irwin points out in the Afterword to this volume that Solomon's flying carpet is mentioned in the Qur'an and appears frequently in Arabic literature. The flying carpet became the most recognizable symbol of the *Arabian Nights* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially after it appeared in Douglas Fairbanks's film *The Thief of Bagdad* in 1924. The flying carpet is also a key plot element in Disney's *Aladdin* (1992), where the carpet has a personality of its own.

13. *the prince formed the desire to be transported:* The association of the magic carpet with wish fulfillment has been appropriated by many authors, including some who generally have avoided the supernatural qualities of the *Nights*. In Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), Milly feels smothered by the hospitality she receives in London: "conscious of the enveloping flap of a protective mantle, a shelter with the weight of an Eastern carpet. An Eastern carpet, for wishing-purposes of one's own, was a thing to be on rather than under" (Book 5, chap. 1). As she deals with the symptoms of a mortal illness, Milly is not afforded the sensation of freedom and possibility associated with the flying carpet in other literary contexts.

14. *As he was curious to see the king of Bisnagar and his court:* This part of the story is not strictly necessary for the competition among the three princes. It may have been an excuse to integrate material familiar to Galland through his academic work. This digression may also have been sparked by Diyab, who had recently sought to satisfy his curiosity with a visit to the court of Versailles to see King Louis XIV.

15. *he saw a temple:* The description of an Indian temple has been inserted by Galland, who took it from the work of a Persian historian whose writings he had translated (Abdel-Halim, pp. 235, 280–82). Marina Warner sees the descriptions of marketplaces and foreign cities in the journeys of the three princes as evidence of an "empirical curiosity about other peoples, their ways and their worlds," that will spur the development of a scientific mode of writing in Europe (p. 75).

16. *a thousand elephants:* These long descriptions of Indian celebrations have been inserted by Galland, presumably to bring the story closer to the style of the wondrous tales that are part of the *Nights*. These passages are reminiscent of the exotic places visited by Sinbad on his voyages, with their emphasis on unusual animals and customs.

17. *a caravan on the road to Persia:* It is Galland who takes Prince Ali all the way to Persia and the city of Shiraz. A number of stories in the *One Thousand and One Nights* have a Persian setting, and Diyab himself sets "The Story of the Jealous Sisters" in Persia. In this case, Galland may have wanted to increase the exotic quality of the tale of the three princes.

18. *This was a vast, vaulted place:* Galland adds a description of a great covered market that seems to resemble the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul. Each of the princes' tales offers a slightly different vantage point on the rich mercantile life of the East.

19. *a small pipe made of ivory:* The description of this marvelous object is quite precise in the notes that Galland made from Diyab's storytelling. Diyab's tube was made of ebony rather than ivory and was lined with glass on each end. The proportions match those in Galland's retelling. This seems to be one of the occasions when Galland elevates the material of the marvelous object to make it seem more valuable.

20. *"you will see whatever you wish to see":* Galland has given the strange object the qualities of a telescope, an instrument that was invented in Europe around 1600. Diyab's description in Galland's notes suggest that he imagined this as a more magical object. In these notes, the seller says, "[O]ne would see what one wished to see, what one would do there, what was there, at any distance whatsoever" (see Part III, Hanna Diyab Tales). This suggests a form of divination rather than a scientific instrument. Robert Irwin argues that Prince Ali's object could be a version of the magic mirror that appears in both Eastern and Western tales ("Afterword"). Indeed, in a Corsican version of the tale, narrated orally in 1955, three young men compete to bring the best present to their beloved, and one brings "a mirror that enables one to see any person on earth." In a French version narrated at the beginning of the twentieth century, the object is a pair of magic glasses (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 107–8). Fittingly, in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), the three rival kings bring a crystal ball, a flying carpet, and a magic curative apple.

21. *he wished to see her:* The ivory tube of Prince Ali was adopted by writers as a metaphor for distant knowledge. Charlotte Brontë used this image in her novel *Shirley* (1849) to explain the uncomfortable distance between Caroline and the financially troubled mill owner whom she loves: "As I sat by myself in the evenings, I used to feel a strange certainty of conviction I cannot describe, that if a magician or a genius had, at that moment, offered me Prince Ali's tube (you remember it in the 'Arabian Nights'?), and if, with its aid, I had been enabled to take a view of Robert—to see where he was, how occupied—I should have learned, in a startling manner, the width of the chasm which gaped between such as he and such as I" (*Shirley*, p. 229).

22. *to see the marvels of Shiraz and its surroundings:* Each prince is curious to see how a foreign court operates and what marvels a city might contain. This was likely Galland's addition to extend the story, but it was in fact the pattern of Diyab's own travels with Paul Lucas from Aleppo to Paris. Diyab's memoir reveals that he was always curious about the cities through which they passed and he took the time to explore their markets, monuments, and churches. He also had several opportunities to enter the palaces of local governors and report on their qualities.

23. *"it cures all diseases":* Galland inserts a list of diseases that could be cured by the apple. Diyab simply says that even a dying person would be restored to health if he smelled the apple. This magical object resembles the magical healing elixir that Diyab claims was in the possession of Paul Lucas while they traveled together through North Africa. In his memoir, Diyab writes that Lucas fell seriously ill in Tunis, and as he lay in bed, consumed with fever, Diyab abandoned all hope of his recovery. But then Lucas gave him instructions to find a crystal flask inside his cabinet of medicines and to put three drops of the liquid into wine and administer it to him. The next morning, Lucas appeared to be cured, and he told Diyab that the elixir was nothing less than the legendary philosopher's stone, whose secret he had discovered in a journal in a French monastery (*Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 68–69).

24. *"the whole city of Samarkand":* This specific reference point comes from Diyab's storytelling.

25. *"a celebrated philosopher of this city":* Samarkand was known as an important center of intellectual life, especially during the Timurid Renaissance from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. However, the sources relating to Diyab and Lucas's journey indicate that there may have been a specific association between Samarkand and magic healing for Diyab. In his published travelogue, Lucas described finding the philosopher's stone, which could give the user eternal youth, with the help of an Uzbek dervish he had met in Anatolia. The Uzbek dervish had accumulated enormous wisdom, and he told the French traveler that he could live a thousand years through mastery of the occult sciences. The dervish said that he was personally acquainted with the great French alchemist Nicolas Flamel, whom he had visited three years earlier in the Indies, when he would have been 375 years old (*Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 70–71).

26. *having counted out the forty purses:* On each of their journeys, the princes acquire a magical object in a marketplace for a specific price, and each prince acts as a responsible trader by ascertaining whether the object is actually worth that price by testing it. The merchant's value system dominates in the first part of this story, just as it does in many of the original stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. This is likely to have reflected the concerns of Diyab as a storyteller, since he came from a merchant family and became a successful merchant on his return to Aleppo.

27. *particularly the valley of Sogdia:* Galland has inserted this description of the valley of Sogdia from the *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697), an important reference text that Galland edited after the death of Barthélemy d'Herbelot.

28. *"you will find yourselves there in a moment":* As in "The Enchanted Horse," another story added to the *Arabian Nights* by Diyab and Galland, the magic object allows the possessor to transcend the conventional limitations of time and space. The oral versions of this story pattern studied by Ulrich Marzolph make this clear. In the Corsican version recorded in 1955, the young men travel to save their beloved on a horse that can cover in a single hour the distance that would normally take a year. In the French version from Basse-Bretagne from the beginning of the twentieth century, a magic carriage rushes the protagonists home to save their family (*101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 107–8).

29. *"show you whatever you wish to see":* Prince Ali's pipe acts essentially as a magic mirror, a frequent motif in European fairy tales. Perhaps the most famous is the magic mirror of the evil queen in "Snow White," a tale recorded by the Grimm brothers and given lasting fame in the 1937 animated Disney film.

30. *the princess opened her eyes:* In a fourteenth-century Persian tale that parallels this tale of three princes, three suitors must rescue a beautiful woman from an evil fairy by using their magic skills. The first uses divination to determine where the woman is being held captive, the second constructs a flying horse to take them there, and the third uses his magic bow and arrow to kill the evil fairy. Of course, the princes then cannot decide who will marry her after she is saved (Irwin, "Afterword"). Oral narratives of similar stories vary these events slightly. In a Corsican version from 1955, the woman actually dies and has to be resuscitated by a magic flower; in a French version, three apples are conveniently available to heal the hero's mother, father, and adopted sister (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 107–8).

31. *"My cabinet is not short on curiosities":* Marina Warner suggests that the magic objects in the first part of this story reflect the passion for collecting such "ingenious devices" among

seventeenth-and eighteenth-century aristocrats (p. 75). Both of the creators of this story were involved in such pursuits. Galland collected manuscripts and coins for the cabinets of the royal court, and Diyab traveled to Paris with Paul Lucas, a collector of curiosities and antiquities. The young Syrian hoped to get a commission to go back to the Middle East in the same capacity.

32. *was so fierce and so sincere:* The fate of Prince Hussein seems to have been an addition by Galland. While he follows the pattern of love stories in the *Nights* by stressing the enormous suffering of the thwarted lover, he also gives the character some redemption by suggesting that he became an example of spiritual virtue.

33. *"This mystery":* Diyab seems to have emphasized this point in his recital of the story for Galland. In the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, such mysterious circumstances are commonly explained as a function of destiny. The fate of Prince Ahmad, like Diyab's other protagonists (including Aladdin and Ali Baba), is being determined by forces that he does not yet understand.

34. *though it neighbored his father's capital:* This hidden palace, nestled apparently unseen near the prince's kingdom, echoes the spatial disruptions present in other stories of the *Nights*. In "The Tale of the Enchanted Prince," the palace of the cursed prince remains unseen until the sultan appears at its door. The palace inhabited by the third dervish in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" encompasses a multitude of realms hidden behind a series of doors.

35. *"the world is inhabited by jinn":* As the woman suggests, the jinn are part of God's creation according to Islam, and they inhabit the world alongside human beings, although they are usually unseen. Pari Banu is usually called a "fairy," in recognition of her Persian origins (*peri* being the Persian term for a supernatural being that the Arabs would call a jinni). She displays the supernatural power associated with the jinn in other *Arabian Nights* stories, but her world resembles the human realm. Romantic entanglements between jinn and humans appear elsewhere in the *Nights* and can end well (as in the stories of "Sayf al-Muluk and Princess Badiat al-Jamal" and "Hasan of Basra") or unhappily (as in "The Story of Janshah").

36. *You must not be surprised that I know you:* This introduction of Pari Banu is in keeping with the portrayal of other women in the Diyab tales related to Galland. As Yasmine Seale writes, "They are the crafty ones, the magicians, endowed with their own private language and special powers of intuition."

37. *"since I am the one":* This suggestion is not included in Galland's notes from Diyab's oral narration of this tale, and it may represent Galland's attempt to tie the two parts of the story together more firmly. The magical power of the three objects to extend human capacities beyond the ordinary limits of time and space is thus explained by their origins in the realm of the jinn. Pari Banu has somehow identified the worth of Prince Ali early in the story, but it is difficult to see what distinguishes him from his brothers. This is probably another example of Galland trying to provide moral explanations for the vagaries of fate within the tales.

38. *yielding to the new object of his desire:* This is a classic example of love at first sight in a story collection in which this is common. This love story partakes of some of the characteristics of the Persian love stories contained in the *1001 Nights*, where fate intervenes to bring the characters together (Gerhardt, pp. 122–23).

39. *“It is not customary for women to make such advances to men”:* Galland’s journal entry suggests that it was Diyab’s idea that Pari Banu would propose marriage to Prince Ahmad. Galland seems to be making an apology for this violation of gendered practices by attributing it to jinn customs. The *One Thousand and One Nights* actually contains a number of couples in which the woman is more assertive and the man more passive. Prince Ahmad cannot be considered the equivalent of the shiftless ‘Ali Shar, who is nevertheless loved by the courageous and resourceful Zumurrud, but he is not Pari Banu’s equal in intelligence or power. Some critics have pointed to examples of men taking fairy brides in medieval European stories (for instance, in “Lanval,” one of the stories [*lais*] of Marie de France) as evidence that Galland’s story is rooted in European folklore, but there are also precedents of jinni–human marriages in the *Nights*—for instance, in “Julnar of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Basim.”

40. *where he saw diamonds, rubies, emeralds:* The immense wealth of Pari Banu’s realm demonstrates the greater emphasis on riches in the added stories of Diyab and Galland. This formula, which uses precious gemstones to represent the wealth of the jinn realm, is often repeated by Diyab in the memoir of his travels. His description of the procession for the feast of Corpus Christi thus refers to the brilliance of the “diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other precious jewels” in the monstrance that is carried by the religious leaders (*Marvellous Thieves*, p. 52).

41. *The next room they entered:* The long description of the wedding feast allows Galland to provide his readers with the luxurious settings and festive atmosphere that they relished. It is reminiscent of the wedding feast of Aladdin and his princess, especially the dance that precedes the departure of the couple to the nuptial chamber. This scene seems to draw from the European fairy tale rather than the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

42. *who had always loved and honored his father the sultan:* The relationship between the father and the son is central to the story after the contest for Princess Nurunnihar has concluded. The Victorian novelist George Meredith recognized the importance of this theme by adopting it as the intertext of his 1886 novel *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*. He explains the itinerant life of Harry and his father with references to the magical objects of the princes: “During this Arabian life, we sat on a carpet that flew to the Continent, where I fell sick, and was cured by smelling at an apple, and my father directed our movements through the aid of a telescope, which told us of the hotels ready to receive us” (p. 40).

43. *remembered a witch whose reputation was excellent:* A witch is enlisted to use her skills in divination to find out where the prince is. No one appears to think of using the ivory tube instead, since these two parts of the story are only lightly linked. In stressing the reputation of the witch, Galland seems to be trying to assure his European readers that she is not an evil sorceress. Some uses of magic were common in medieval Islamic society, and Diyab was certainly familiar with common uses of talismans and divination from his time in the Middle East, but Europe’s relationship to magic was more fraught in the eighteenth century, when this story was forged.

44. *she resolved to grant him what he so clearly desired:* Galland adds long passages in which he reveals the thoughts and feelings of his characters. This is one of the reasons the added tales of Diyab and Galland are considered to have more fully developed characters than the original Arabic tales.

45. *“Love is a passion that cannot be abandoned at will”:* The intensity of love is once again suggested, but so too is the passive quality of many lovers in the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Deprived of their love, the characters tend to pine away—waiting for fate to resolve their situation.

46. *"its solution is another mystery":* Mystery is a dangerous thing in the *Nights*. Curiosity is seldom kept in check for long, and efforts to resolve the mystery usually end in disaster. "The Tale of the Third Dervish" within "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" might be considered emblematic of this pattern.

47. *At last some viziers:* Scheming viziers are a staple of stories in the *Nights*. The best example in the collection might be the vizier in "The Tale of King Yunan and the Wise Duban," but in cinema, Conrad Veidt's Jaffar in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) set the model. The sultan of India, in "Prince Ahmad," appears to be easy to manipulate, another characterization that will linger in such popular films as *Aladdin* (1992).

48. *The crafty witch:* In the Icelandic tale that closely parallels this story, the king's new wife is the one who convinces him that his youngest son might be a threat to his rule and that he should set a series of three challenges for him to complete in a year, under pain of death. She turns out to be a troll in disguise (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 106).

49. *"a remedy against all fevers":* While traveling to Paris with Paul Lucas, Diyab witnessed the use of various elixirs, as well as magical amulets, for healing. There are a number of other magical healing potions in the *Nights*. In the tale of the "Queen of the Serpents," the queen has access to the herb of eternal life and Hasib Karim al-Din will concoct a potion that can heal the gravely ill king by sacrificing the queen.

50. *a throne of solid gold:* Once again, Galland has added details to overwhelm the reader with the marvelous wealth of the fairy kingdom.

51. *the sultan could not help but be struck by the witch's words:* Galland's notes from Diyab's oral delivery of this story suggest that the sultan immediately becomes jealous of his son when he hears from the witch about the fairy kingdom. Galland offers a more sympathetic sultan who believes that Ahmad has a good heart but still feels he must take action against a potential threat to his kingdom.

52. *found such measures too violent:* In Diyab's version of the story, the witch advises the sultan to kill the prince by asking him to perform tasks that will be impossible for him. In Galland's retelling, he tries to suggest that the tasks being asked of Ahmad are some kind of test that will ultimately shame him into abandoning his father's court. It is not a persuasive addition to the story.

53. *"a tent that might fit in a man's hand":* This idea corresponds to other examples of magic that subvert conventional understandings of space in this story.

54. *"a father's wish is a son's command":* Prince Ahmad shows himself to be dutiful throughout the tale, and Galland makes sure that the reader recognizes his passive obedience as virtue.

55. *"I see that you are unaware of the power a husband has over a wife":* In another insertion by Galland, the sultan implies that he has a very different notion of marriage than that of the young lovers.

56. *“the unhappy position of being a burden on you”:* Galland feels he must address the power imbalance in the relationship between the prince and his jinni wife. A situation that appears natural within the context of the *Nights* tale causes the translator, and presumably his readers, some concern.

57. *“it has the property of growing or shrinking”:* This magical object became a powerful image in the writing of Charlotte Brontë, a lifelong reader of the tales of the *Nights*. In the novel *Villette*, Lucy Snow finds her affection for Graham Bretton unreturned and will be forced to bury her desires. Yet she confesses, “I kept a place for him [Graham], too—a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my life long I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand—yet, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host” (p. 572).

58. *he felt a sharper jealousy:* By this stage, Galland must allow that the evil of envy has taken root in the sultan and will lead to disaster.

59. *the Fountain of Lions:* The fountain in this story was described by Diyab shortly after his visit to the palace of Versailles. It may refer to the Fountains of the Fight of the Animals, added to the Versailles gardens in 1687, or to a fountain in a Paris Opera production that made a deep impression on the young Diyab (*Marvellous Thieves*, pp. 49–50). “The Tale of the Enchanted Prince,” which has a fountain adorned with four lions of red gold, may also have suggested this setting.

60. *“First take this ball of thread”:* These elaborate instructions from Pari Banu are contained in Galland’s notes from Diyab’s recital of the tale. The throwing of the ball to show the path to his destination is similar to the instruction of the dervish in Diyab’s “Story of the Jealous Sisters.” In order to collect the water from the fountain, Ahmad relies not on his fairy wife’s magic but on her cleverness. This is another sign that she belongs among the great female protagonists of the *Nights*.

61. *“Bring me a man no taller than a foot and a half”:* The details of this request were included in Diyab’s recital of this tale, although Galland appears to have changed the stick he was to carry into an iron bar.

62. *“His nature is so violent”:* Diyab seems to have pointed out that Shaybar was one of the “maleficent” jinn, presumably a nonbeliever. Galland tries to find a way to make his character more sympathetic. His violent temper is only supposed to come out when he is insulted (hence placing the blame for the consequences on the other party).

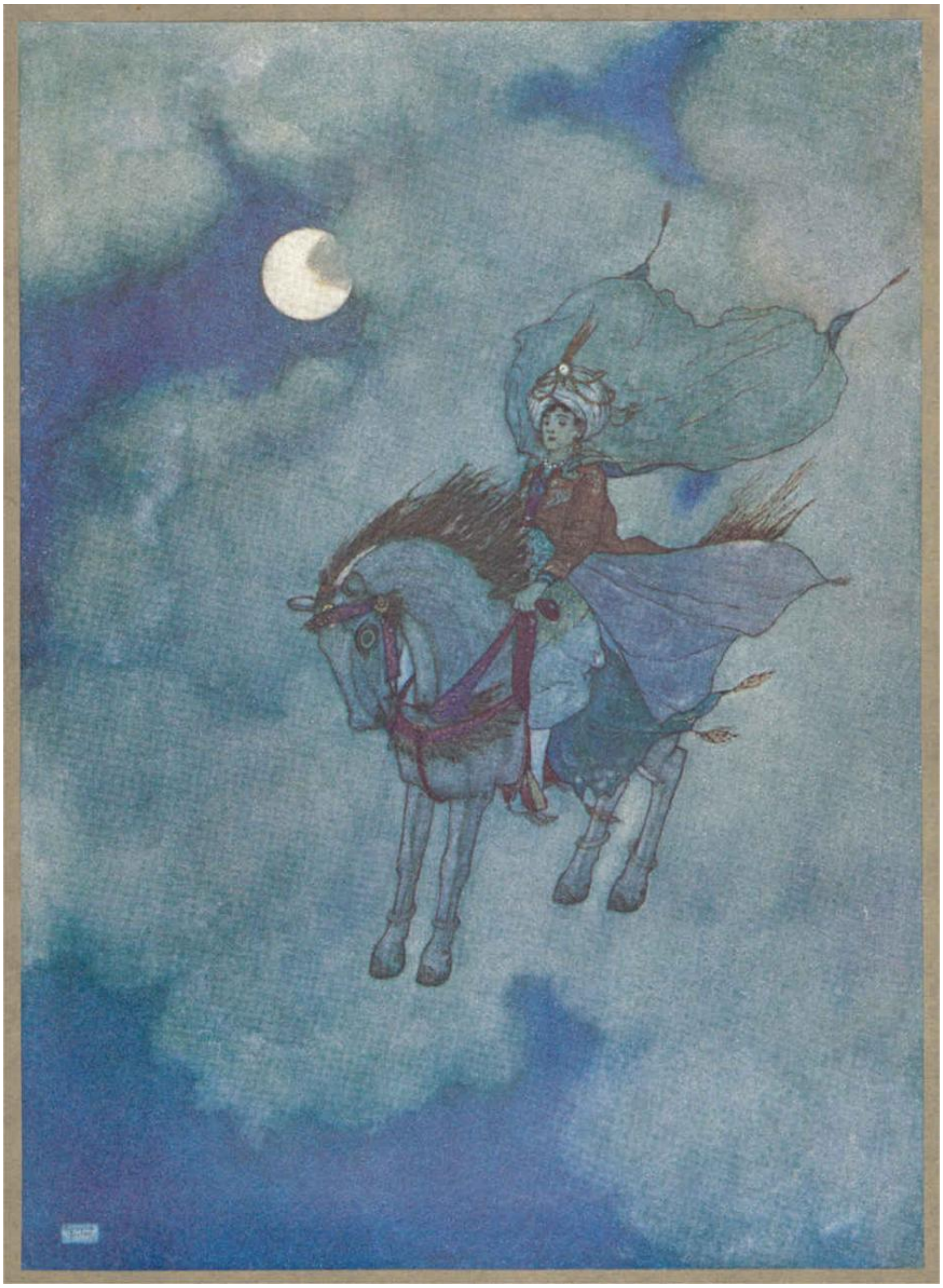
63. *a gold incense burner full of fire:* This method of invoking a jinni draws on the conventional understanding that these were spirits of fire.

64. *he had a hump on his back and one on his front:* Galland has added some details to Shaybar’s appearance to make him more repulsive.

65. *“Is there any way, Sister”:* Despite the singularity of Shaybar’s appearance, Galland suggests that he is devoted to his sister and anxious to fulfill his familial duty. He is determined to find some redeeming features in the potentially dangerous jinni.

66. *“You called for me”:* The sultan has literally called up his own nemesis by listening to the poisoned words of his viziers and the witch. Galland’s telling of this tale makes it seem as though the violent actions of Shaybar are a response to the rudeness of his reception.

67. *Prince Hussein felt himself so happy in his solitude:* Galland is careful to tie up the loose ends from the first part of the story by imagining the responses of the two brothers to their brother’s ascension to power.



The Prince of Persia and the Enchanted Horse. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

THE ENCHANTED HORSE

The plot of “The Enchanted Horse” contains all the elements that the growing audience for fairy tales in eighteenth-century France would have relished: the prince who falls in love with the princess at first sight, the luxurious settings of magnificent palaces, the rich display of precious jewels and valuable fabrics, the grand feasts presided over by beautiful slave girls. These clichés of the “Orient” (likely added by Galland as he turned Diyab’s plot into the tale published as part of the Arabian Nights*) add artificial luster to a story that is essentially about desire—for both love and the amazing object of the enchanted horse. Galland’s added moral, which urges courtesy on suitors pursuing their princesses, does little to cloak the ends to which the characters will go to obtain the objects of their obsessive passions.*

“The Enchanted Horse” was told by Hanna Diyab to Antoine Galland[1] *on May 13, 1709, and was included in the eleventh volume of his French version of the* Arabian Nights. *The basic elements of this story are well-known in folklore in the Middle East and Europe, and a version of the tale was included in later Arabic editions of the* One Thousand and One Nights *such as the Calcutta II edition. It also appeared in rival story collections such as the* One Hundred and One Nights *(based on a North African manuscript) and the* Thousand and One Days *(authored by François Pétis de la Croix from a Persian manuscript source). The story by Diyab and Galland included here is only one of numerous versions that circulated as part of different oral and textual chains of transmission.*

The origins of this tale have been traced to a story in the Indian Panchatantra *in which a carpenter builds an artificial Garuda, a birdlike animal that serves the god Vishnu, to help his weaver friend reach the princess he loves (*Arabian Nights Encyclopedia, *pp. 173–74). Scholars have recognized the essential elements of this story in many literary works from the medieval period in Europe and have speculated that a Spanish version of the tale might be responsible for its transmission to medieval France. A flying wooden horse appears in two medieval romances from the thirteenth century—*Cléomadès *by Adenet Le Roi and* Méliacin *by Girard d'Amiens. Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales *also includes an unfinished story, "The Squire's Tale," which features a mechanical flying horse of brass brought by an Arabian knight as a gift to King Cambuscan (a version of Genghis Khan). Similarities can also be seen between Galland's story and the sixteenth-century Italian story "Bellisandra and Livoretto," by Straparola.*

The flying horse in "The Enchanted Horse" resonated deeply with readers as a device that would allow human beings to overcome the normal limits of space and time through magical, almost instantaneous, mobility. Readers today might see this as proto–science fiction, but the One Thousand and One Nights *also shows that a fascination with flight was part of medieval Arabic culture—as the flying horse in "The Tale of the Third Dervish" reveals. The visual potential in such images of possibility was exploited by the many artists who sought inspiration in the stories of the* Arabian Nights. *Marc Chagall's lithographs are perhaps the most powerful visual representations of the story, but "The Enchanted Horse" was also a favorite of many of the book illustrators of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The German filmmaker Lotte Reiniger used the story of "The Enchanted Horse" to great effect as the narrative frame for the first full-length animated film,* The Adventures of Prince Achmed, *in 1926. Her animated silhouettes capture the wonder that was part of the story's appeal in all its retellings.*

SHAHRAZAD, whose stories brought the sultan such delight, told him another.

* * *

MAJESTY, I NEED HARDLY TELL YOU that Nowruz, or the new day,[2] which is to say the first day of the year and of spring, is a feast of such ancient importance in Persia, old as idol worship, that the religion of our Prophet, for all that we hold it to be true, has never been able to stamp out its pagan rituals. To say nothing of the cities, this festival is marked in every town and village with fantastic celebrations.

Those at the court, of course, outshine the rest with their enchanting spectacles. Travelers from neighboring and far states are drawn by the prizes with which the kings reward those who distinguish themselves by their energy and flair, to such a degree that nothing on earth can be compared to the splendor one sees there.

On one of these occasions,[3] after the most ingenious minds of the land, along with those others who had made the journey to Shiraz, had given the king and his court the pleasure of their performances, and the king handed out his rewards, to each according to their merit and in proportion to the radiance of their display, in such a way that none felt cheated of their due, and as he was on the point of dismissing the crowd, an Indian man appeared at the foot of his throne. Beside him was a horse, saddled, bridled, beautifully harnessed, and made so artfully[4] that it seemed, at first glance, to be a real horse.

The Indian man bowed low before the throne, then stood up straight and pointed to the horse.

“Majesty,” he said, “although I am the last to enter the fray, I can assure you that nothing you have seen on this feast day is as marvelous as this horse, which I beg you to consider.”

“I see nothing in this horse,” said the king, “beside the carver’s skill in creating a likeness as close to nature as he was able. But another carver might have done just as well, might even have made a better one.”

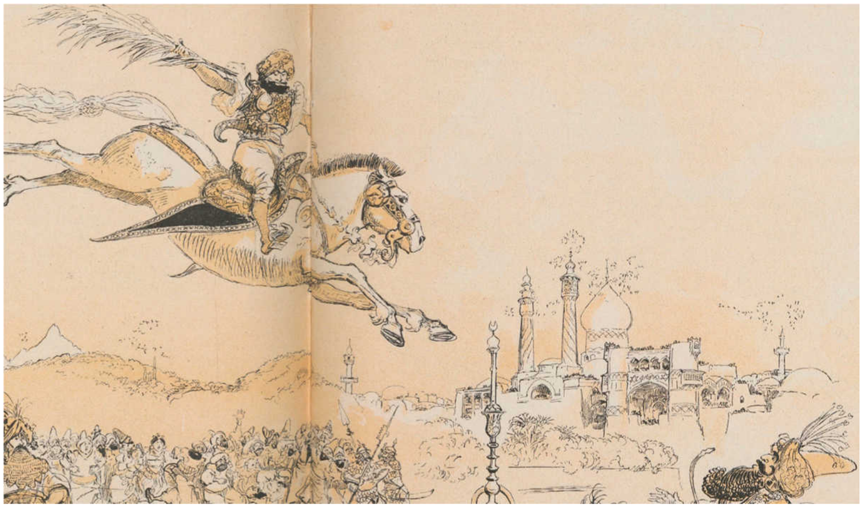
“Majesty,” said the man, “it is neither for its design nor its appearance that I call this horse a marvel. It is for the use I make of it, thanks to a secret I can teach anyone who wishes. When I am on this horse’s back, there is no place on earth so remote than I cannot reach it at once by riding it through the air.[5] That, Majesty, is what makes my horse marvelous: a treasure that is so far unknown to the world, and that I propose to demonstrate for your delight, should you order me to do so.”

The king of Persia, who nursed a curiosity for all marvelous things, and who, having seen and sought so many things of this nature, had never seen or heard of any like this, said to the man that nothing would convince him of the horse’s rarity better than the demonstration he proposed, and that he was ready to see the truth of it.

At this, the man set his foot in the stirrup and hopped deftly onto the horse. When his other foot was secure, and he was steady on his saddle, he asked the king of Persia where he wished to send him.

About three leagues from Shiraz, there was a high mountain that could be seen in full from the great square where the king now stood before his palace.

“Do you see that mountain?” said the king. “That is where you shall go. The distance is not very great, but it is enough to judge your speed in coming and going. And since the eye cannot follow you all the way there, as proof that you reached it, I ask that you bring back a leaf from the palm tree that stands at the foot of the mountain.”



The stranger returned with a palm leaf in hand. Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909). The satirical style that Robida brought to his illustrations was also characteristic of the trio of futuristic novels he wrote and illustrated before he turned to the* Arabian Nights.

The king of Persia had hardly completed this wish when the Indian man turned a peg beneath the horse’s neck,[6] bringing it closer to the saddle’s pommel. At that moment, the horse left the ground and swept the rider across the sky like a flash of lightning, so high that in seconds he was lost even to the sharpest eyes. The king and all his courtiers were amazed, and cries of astonishment rang out from the crowd.

The man had not been gone a quarter hour when he was seen, high in the air, returning with a palm leaf in hand. At last he arrived above the square, where he performed several caracoles to the delight of the applauding crowd, and landed without the slightest jolt in the spot he had left. He dismounted, and, touching his forehead to the ground before the throne, laid the palm leaf at the king’s feet.

In equal shock and delight, the king of Persia now longed to have the horse for himself, and he resolved to exchange it for whatever sum the man might name. Already he considered the horse to be the jewel in his collection of treasures.

“Judging by its appearance,” said the king, “I had not thought this horse as precious as it is, and I am in your debt for showing me otherwise. If it is for sale, I will buy it.”

“Majesty,” said the man, “I never doubted that Your Highness,[7] known as you are among the kings of the earth for your fair judgment, would consider my horse with the justice you have shown, as soon as I had proved it worthy of your attention. I even fancied that you might want to become its owner. As for me, though I know its worth as far as it is possible to know, and though its possession has made my name immortal, nothing is so dear to me that I will not part with it to satisfy Your Highness’s desire. But there is one condition that must be satisfied before I let it pass into other hands. I should say, first, that I did not buy this horse. I only obtained it from its inventor after giving him my only daughter to marry, as he wished, and after assuring him that I would never sell it, only exchange it for something I considered worthy.”

The man wanted to go on, but at the word “exchange,” the king interrupted.

“I am prepared,” he said, “to exchange it for whatever you wish. You know that my kingdom is vast and filled with large, rich, and peopled cities. You may choose whichever one you would like to rule for the rest of your days.”

To the court of Persia, this seemed a princely exchange, but it was far beneath what the man had in mind.

“Majesty,” he said, “my gratitude is without limit, but I beg you not to take offense if I say that I will part with my horse only in exchange for the hand of your daughter the princess.”

The courtiers could not help but laugh at the man’s extravagant request. But Prince Firuz Shah, the king’s oldest son and heir to the throne, felt nothing but indignation. The king himself was prepared to sacrifice the princess of Persia to satisfy his own curiosity, but he wondered whether he ought to.[8]

Prince Firuz Shah, seeing his father waver, feared he would give in to the man’s request, which he considered an affront to the dignity of the king, of his sister the princess, and of his own person. He spoke up.

“Forgive me,” he said, “if I ask how it is possible for you to hesitate a single moment before saying no to this man, this nothing, to let him flatter himself that he might enter into marriage with the daughter of one of the most powerful monarchs of the earth. I beg you to consider what you owe yourself, your blood, and the high birth of your ancestors."

"My son," replied the king, "I welcome your reproach, and I appreciate the zeal with which you wish to maintain your bloodline in the state you found it. But consider this horse. Consider that the man who offers me this means of obtaining it may, if I turn him down, make the same offer elsewhere, and that others would not be so principled. I would die if another king were to deprive me of the glory of owning this horse, which I hold to be the strangest and most exciting thing on earth.[9] I do not mean that I will grant him what he wants. Perhaps he has not realized the extravagance of his wish, and I may yet strike some other deal with him and spare my daughter. But before we come to the terms of the trade, I would like you to inspect the horse and try it out yourself. I have no doubt he will allow it."

Desire likes to flatter itself, and the Indian man, guessing from what he overheard of their exchange that the king might yet accept his proposal, and that the prince might be brought around to it, agreed with joy. As a sign of his goodwill, he stood by the horse to help the prince mount and guide him on how to hold it steady.

Prince Firuz Shah leapt nimbly onto the horse without waiting for help, and before the Indian man could say a word, when the prince's feet were safely in their stirrups, he turned the peg as he had just seen it done. As soon as it was turned, the horse snatched him away with the speed of an arrow released by the most skillful archer, and in a few moments he had vanished from sight.

Neither horse nor prince could be seen in the sky, and the king of Persia squinted after them in vain, when the Indian man threw himself down in alarm before the throne and forced the king's attention.

"Majesty," said the man, "you saw for yourself that the prince in his haste did not let me guide him on how to steer my horse. Having watched me do it, he wanted to show me that he needed no advice to take off and fly away. Nor did he wait for my guidance on how to turn the horse back. I beg you, Majesty, not to blame me for what might happen to him. You are too just to hold his misfortune against me."

At the thought that his son might be in danger if it was true that the horse would not return except by a secret he did not know, the king was furious and asked the man why he had not called him back as soon as he saw him go.

“You saw for yourself,” said the man, “how swiftly they were gone, so fast that I was struck speechless. And when I recovered my voice, he was too far away to hear it. Had he heard it, he would not have known how to turn the horse back, since he was not patient enough to learn its secret from me. But Majesty, there is hope: The prince will surely notice another peg, and think to turn it, whereupon the horse will stop its ascent and will move instead toward the earth, where the prince will be able to land in a suitable place by steering it with the bridle.”

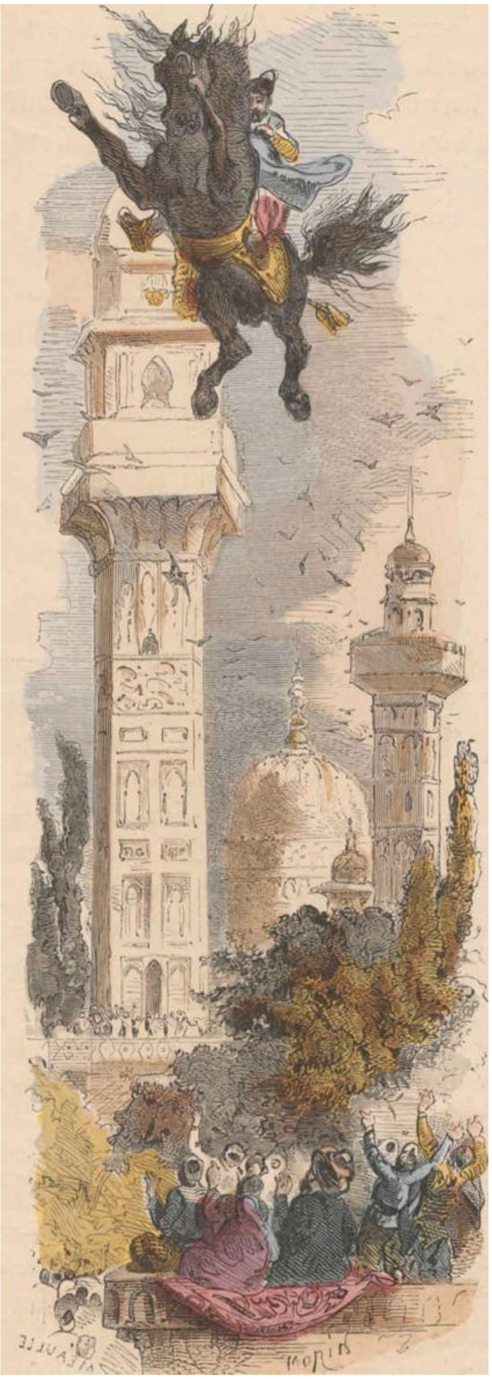
This seemed plausible enough, but the king of Persia could not shake his alarm at the thought of his son in danger.

“Supposing,” he said, “though it is very doubtful, my son thinks to turn the other peg, will the horse not fall crashing onto rocks, or plunge into the sea?”

“You have nothing to fear,” said the man, “for the horse crosses the sea without ever falling into it, and always takes its rider where he wishes to go.[10] Be assured that, as long as the prince uses the other peg as I have said, he cannot but find help and make himself known.”

“Regardless,” said the king, “since I cannot trust your promises, your head will be the ransom of my son’s life if I do not see him return safely within three months, or learn beyond doubt that he is alive.”

He ordered that the man be arrested and kept in a narrow jail. Then he retired to his palace, mortified that the feast of Nowruz should have ended so sadly for him and for his court.



“The horse snatched him away with the speed of an arrow.” From Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

Prince Firuz Shah, meanwhile, was carried swiftly into the air, and in an hour he was so high up that he lost sight of the features of the earth, and the mountains appeared to melt into the plains.[11] That is when he thought to go back, and he imagined he would need only to turn the same peg and the bridle the other way, but he was alarmed, when he did so, to find the horse bearing him away at the same speed. He turned and turned the peg many times, all in vain. It was then that he recognized the great mistake he had made in mounting the horse before the man had told him how to ride it, and he understood the danger he was in. But this revelation did not cloud his judgment. He gathered his wits, and, by examining the horse’s head and neck, he noticed another peg, smaller and less visible than the first, beside its right ear. He turned it and found himself at once moving toward the earth, only less slowly than he had been borne away.

Night had begun to shadow that part of the earth over which the prince was suspended, and as the horse sank in time with the sun, he soon found himself in darkness. Far from choosing a place to land, he was forced to let go of the horse’s bridle and wait patiently for it to complete its descent, not knowing whether they would alight in a town, a desert, a river, or the sea.

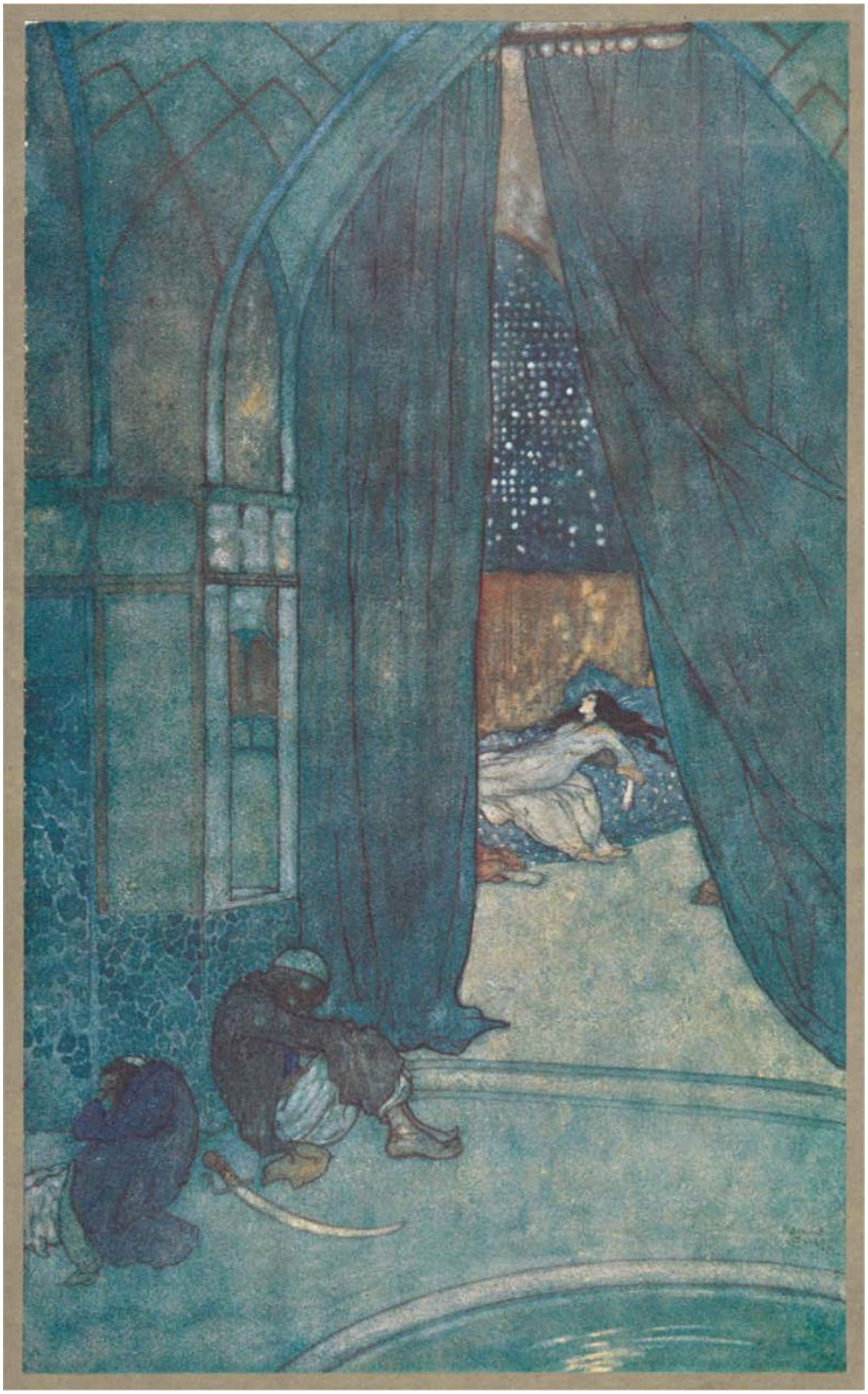
After midnight, the horse landed at last. The prince’s feet met the ground but barely supported his body, as he had eaten nothing since the morning of the day that was now ending, when he had left the palace with his father to attend the festival. Through the gloom, he found that he was on the roof of a splendid palace, a terrace ringed with a marble balustrade, chest high. Casting around, he reached a staircase that led down into the rooms through a half-open door.

Few but Prince Firuz Shah would have ventured[12] down those stairs in such darkness, not knowing what dangers lay beyond.

“I am not here,” he thought, “to harm anyone. Surely whoever sees me first, finding me unarmed, will have the humanity to hear me out before attacking me.”

He pushed the door wider without a sound and crept downstairs. When he came to a landing, he saw light through an open door.

The prince stopped at the door and heard nothing but the sound of sleep. He stepped into the room and in the lamplight saw that the sleepers were black eunuchs, each with his saber beside him. This was enough to tell him that they were guarding the quarters of a princess.



The prince approached the princess's chamber. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

In the next room was the princess’s chamber; he knew this by the light that shone from it through a curtain of sheer silk. The prince moved toward it on tiptoe,[13] careful not to wake the eunuchs, and drew open the curtain. He did not stop to consider the beauty of the chamber. His eye rushed to what concerned him most. There were many beds: one on the sofa and the rest on the floor. The princess lay in the first, her women in the others.

This arrangement was enough to direct the prince to the sofa, where he discovered a beauty so striking that he fell in love.[14]

“Have I been led here,” he wondered, “to be deprived of freedom? How will I avoid enslavement when those eyes open? It is a necessity I must accept, since I cannot move without becoming my own murderer.”

The prince fell to his knees, and, taking the end of the princess’s sleeve, from which a well-turned white arm emerged, he tugged it very gently.[15] The princess opened her eyes, found a handsome, elegant man before her, and was too surprised to speak, though she showed no sign of fear.

The prince seized the moment. He touched his head to the ground, then rose and said, “Princess, by the strangest adventure you can imagine, you have before you a supplicant prince, the son of the king of Persia, who was only this morning in celebration with his father and is now in a strange country, in danger of his life. I beg for your protection, and trust that you will not refuse, as I cannot believe that cruelty ever came wrapped in such loveliness.”

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

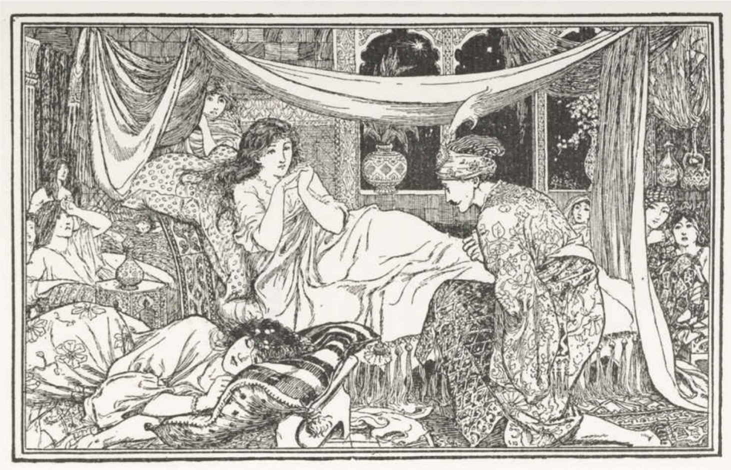
The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The person to whom these words were spoken was the princess of Bengal, eldest daughter of the ruler of that kingdom, who had built her this palace a short distance from his capital, where she liked to come and enjoy the country air.[16] After she had heard the prince with all the gentleness he could have desired, she answered in kind.

"Prince," she said, "take courage; you are not among barbarians. Hospitality, compassion, and politeness[17] are no less the rule in Bengal as they are in Persia. I am not alone in granting you the permission you seek. You will find it not only in my palace but throughout the kingdom. You may take my word for it."



The prince addressed the princess of Bengal. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

The prince of Persia wanted to thank the princess of Bengal for her honesty and care, and he had already bowed his head very low to praise her, but she did not let him speak.

"For all my desire," she said, "to know what magic has spirited you here from the capital of Persia, and by what enchantment you have evaded the vigilance of my guards, it is clear that you need to eat. Since you are a welcome guest, I shall put off my curiosity till tomorrow morning, and give orders to my women to feed you and find you a bed, and to let you rest until you are in a state to satisfy my interest."

The princess's women,[18] who had awakened at the first words the prince spoke to their mistress, could not imagine how he had reached her bedside without rousing them or the eunuchs. At the princess's instructions, they were up, dressed, and ready to work. They each took one of the many candles that lit up the room and went ahead and led him into a beautiful chamber, where some prepared the bed while others went to the kitchen.

Though it was the middle of the night, they did not keep the prince waiting long, and they brought out a succession of heaped dishes. He chose what he liked, and when he had eaten enough, they cleared the plates and, after pointing out the wardrobes that contained all he might need, left him to rest.

The princess of Bengal, meanwhile, whose mind was filled with the charm, wit, courtesy,[19] and all the other qualities that had struck her in her short conversation with the prince, could not find sleep. When her women returned, she asked whether they had taken good care of him, whether he wanted anything, and, above all, what they made of this prince.

The women, after reassuring her on the first two queries, turned to the last.

"Princess," they said, "we do not know what you think of him, but for our part, we think you would be very happy if your father were to marry you to such a lovable prince. No man at the court of Bengal may be compared to him, nor have we heard of any in the neighboring kingdoms who might be worthy of you."

These flattering words pleased the princess, but she did not wish to make her feelings known, so she hushed them. "The tales you tell! Go back to bed, and let me sleep."

The next morning, the princess's first move was to go to her mirror, where she took more care in dressing and grooming than she had ever done. Never before had the patience of her women been so tried, as they were made to do and undo the same outfit several times until she was happy.

"The prince of Persia did not seem to mind me ungroomed," she thought, "but he has seen nothing yet."

She adorned herself with the largest and brightest diamonds,[20] a necklace, bracelets, and a belt inlaid with similar stones. The outfit she chose, of a color that set off her beauty, was cut from the most precious fabric in India, made only for kings. After she had consulted her mirror again, and asked her women, one after another, whether any adjustment was needed, she sent for news of the prince of Persia. If he was awake, which she never doubted, and was waiting for permission to pay his respects, she sent word that she would visit him herself, and that she had her reasons.

The prince of Persia, who had recovered in the night what he had lost to the day's journey, had just dressed when he heard from the princess of Bengal. The woman who brought the message had not completed it when he asked whether the princess was ready to receive his compliments. But after she had carried out the order she was given, he said, "It shall be as the princess sees fit. I am here only for her pleasure."

When the princess heard that the prince was ready, she ran to him. After they had exchanged compliments—the prince begging her pardon for having woken her from deepest sleep, and the princess asking after his night and his health—she sat on the sofa, and the prince did the same,[21] keeping some distance between them.

She spoke first.

"I would have received you," she said, "in the chamber where you found me asleep, but as the chief eunuch is at liberty to enter it, and cannot come in here without my permission, in my impatience to hear the strange adventure that brought you here, I have chosen to receive you where there is no risk of interruption. Make me happy, then, and give me the satisfaction I seek."

To please her, the prince began by describing the festival of Nowruz and all the spectacles that had delighted the court of Persia and might excite her curiosity. Then he came to the subject of the enchanted horse, and his account of the wonders that the man had performed before the crowd convinced the princess that nothing more surprising could be imagined.

"You may well guess," the prince went on, "that my father the king, who spares no expense to fill his treasure houses with the rarest things he encounters, would have longed to add this horse to his collection. He asked the man what it was worth and received an extravagant reply. The man said that he had not bought the horse but had exchanged it for his only daughter, and that he could not part with it except on the same condition. He would not let it go unless the king consented to give him the princess, my sister, to marry.

“The crowd of courtiers who stood around the throne,” continued the prince, “scoffed loudly at the proposal. As for me, I was filled with such outrage that I could not disguise it, all the more so as I saw my father waver about what answer he should give. I believe he was about to grant the man what he asked, had I not persuaded him of the damage it would do to his honor. But my protests could not make him entirely abandon the idea. He fancied he could bring me around to his view, if only I were to grasp as well as he did the singular value of this horse. To that end, he asked me to try it out myself.

“To please my father, I mounted the horse, and as soon as I was steady, I did what I had seen the Indian man do to lift the horse off the ground, and I turned the peg without waiting for his guidance. At once I was taken up into the air, swift as an arrow shot by the most practiced archer. Soon we were so far from earth that I could not make out a single object, and we seemed to move so fast toward the vault of heaven that I feared for my skull. Drunk on speed, I was for a long time almost outside myself, unaware of the dangers I faced, until I thought to turn the peg the other way, but that experiment failed, and the horse went on rising in the sky. At last I noticed another peg, turned it, and the horse began a gentle descent. I was surrounded with darkness and could not guide us to a safe landing, so I left the bridle where it was and entrusted my fate to God.

“At length, the horse settled down, and I found myself on the roof of this palace. There was a staircase and then a half-open door, which I pushed. I saw a light, which I followed. Then there were sleeping eunuchs, and a brighter light behind a curtain. The crisis I was in forced me to risk waking them, and it gave me the courage—the boldness—to go behind the curtain.

“What happened next,” said the prince, “you know. But I must thank you again for your kindness and beg you to tell me how I may show my gratitude. Since, according to the law of nations, I am already your slave[22] and cannot offer you my person, only my heart remains. But really, princess, this heart is no longer mine. Your charms have stolen it, but in such a way that I yield it to you without resistance. Let me, then, declare you mistress of my heart and of my will.”

These last words were pronounced with such an air and tone that the princess never doubted her glamour had had its effect. Nor did she resent the haste with which the prince had declared himself. In his eyes, her reddening cheeks only sharpened her beauty.

“You have given me intense pleasure,” said the princess, “with your strange and wonderful story. I thrilled to think of you so high in the air, and though I have the joy of seeing you before me safe and well, I was afraid until you said the horse had landed on the roof of my palace. The same thing might have happened in a thousand other places. I am glad that chance has chosen me, for it could not have guided you to any place where you would have been received with more joy.

“But, prince, I would be very hurt if I believed that your offer to be my slave were serious, and that it was made not out of politeness but sincerity. By the reception I gave you yesterday, you must understand that you have the same freedom here as you would at the court of Persia.

“As to your heart,” added the princess, “I am sure that you have not lived so long without putting it to use, and that you can only have chosen a princess who deserves it, I would be sorry to give you reason to be unfaithful to her.”

Prince Firuz Shah was about to protest that when he left Persia he was master of his own heart, when one of the princess’s women came in to announce breakfast. The interruption delivered the prince and princess from an explanation that would have been equally embarrassing to both, and one that neither needed. The princess of Bengal was fully convinced of the prince’s sincerity, and although she had not explained herself, the prince in turn judged, from the words she had let fall and the way she listened, that he was right to be pleased.

As the woman held the door open, the princess of Bengal rose and told the prince, who did the same, that she was not used to eating so early, “but as your supper cannot have been very good, I gave the order for breakfast to be served sooner than usual.” She led him into a magnificent hall, where a table was laid and crowded with plates of fine food. When they were seated, a great number of the princess’s slave girls,[23] beautifully dressed, began a concert of voices and instruments that lasted for the length of the meal.

The concert was soft enough to let the prince and princess talk at ease. They spent the time helping and inviting one another to eat, each courtesy drawing new compliments from the other, and in this mutual commerce of service and care, love made quicker progress in both hearts than if their meeting had been arranged.

When at last they left the table, the princess led the prince into a large, richly furnished drawing room painted in blue and gold. They sat on the sofa and looked out onto the palace garden, which Prince Firuz Shah admired for the variety of its flowers, bushes, and trees, as lovely as those of Persia but quite different. He took the opportunity to speak.

“I have always believed,” he said, “that only in Persia were there palaces and gardens fit for kings. But now I see that we are not alone in building halls to match our grandeur, and if there is a difference in style, there is none in splendor.”

“Since I know nothing of the palaces of Persia,” replied the princess of Bengal, “I cannot judge. But however sincere you seem to be, I hardly believe the comparison is fair and can only suppose you are flattering me. Not that I mean to disparage your palace: You have too good an eye and too sharp a mind not to form a sound judgment. But I assure you that I find mine very ordinary when I compare it to my father’s, which far outshines it in beauty and riches.[24] You shall tell me yourself what you think of it, for since chance has brought you to the capital of this kingdom, I do not doubt that you wish to see it and to greet my father the king, so that he may pay you all the honor due to a prince of your standing and virtue.”

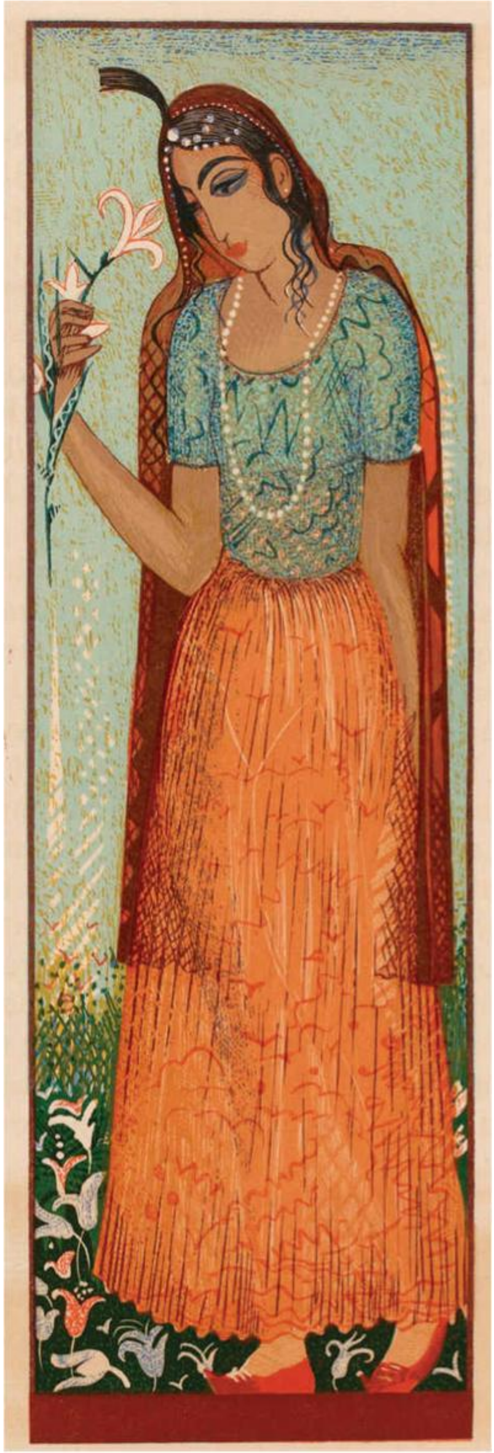


Illustration by François-Louis Schmied, from Histoire Charmante de l'Adolescente Sucre d'Amour, *by J. C. Mardrus (1927).*

By arousing in the prince of Persia a curiosity to see the palace of Bengal and to visit her father, the princess flattered herself that the king, seeing a prince so handsome, wise, and accomplished, might well decide to propose an alliance with him, by offering her to him as a wife. And since she knew she was not indifferent to the prince, and that he would not turn down such a proposal, she hoped to obtain what she desired and still maintain the decorum becoming a princess[25] by appearing to yield to the wishes of her father the king. But the prince of Persia did not respond as she expected.

“Princess,” he said, “the preference you give your father’s palace over your own is quite enough to convince me that it is superior. As for my going to pay my respects to the king, it would be a pleasure and an honor. But would you advise me to present myself before so great a monarch like an adventurer, without an entourage suitable to my rank?”

“Let that not worry you,” said the princess. “You shall not want for money to have whatever entourage you like. I will see to it. We have here traders of your nation in great numbers. You may choose from them as many as you wish to be your attendants.”

Prince Firuz Shah understood the princess’s intention, and this proof of her love increased his passion. But, keen as it was, it did not make him forget his duty. Without hesitation, he replied, “Princess, I would gladly accept your offer, for which I cannot sufficiently express my thanks, if the distress my father must feel on account of my absence did not prevent me. I would be unworthy of the tenderness he has always shown me[26] if I did not return as soon as possible to calm his fears. While I bask in your company, I know he is in dreadful pain and has lost hope of seeing me again. I would be ungrateful, not to say criminal, if I did not go and save his life, which my too-long absence may have endangered already.

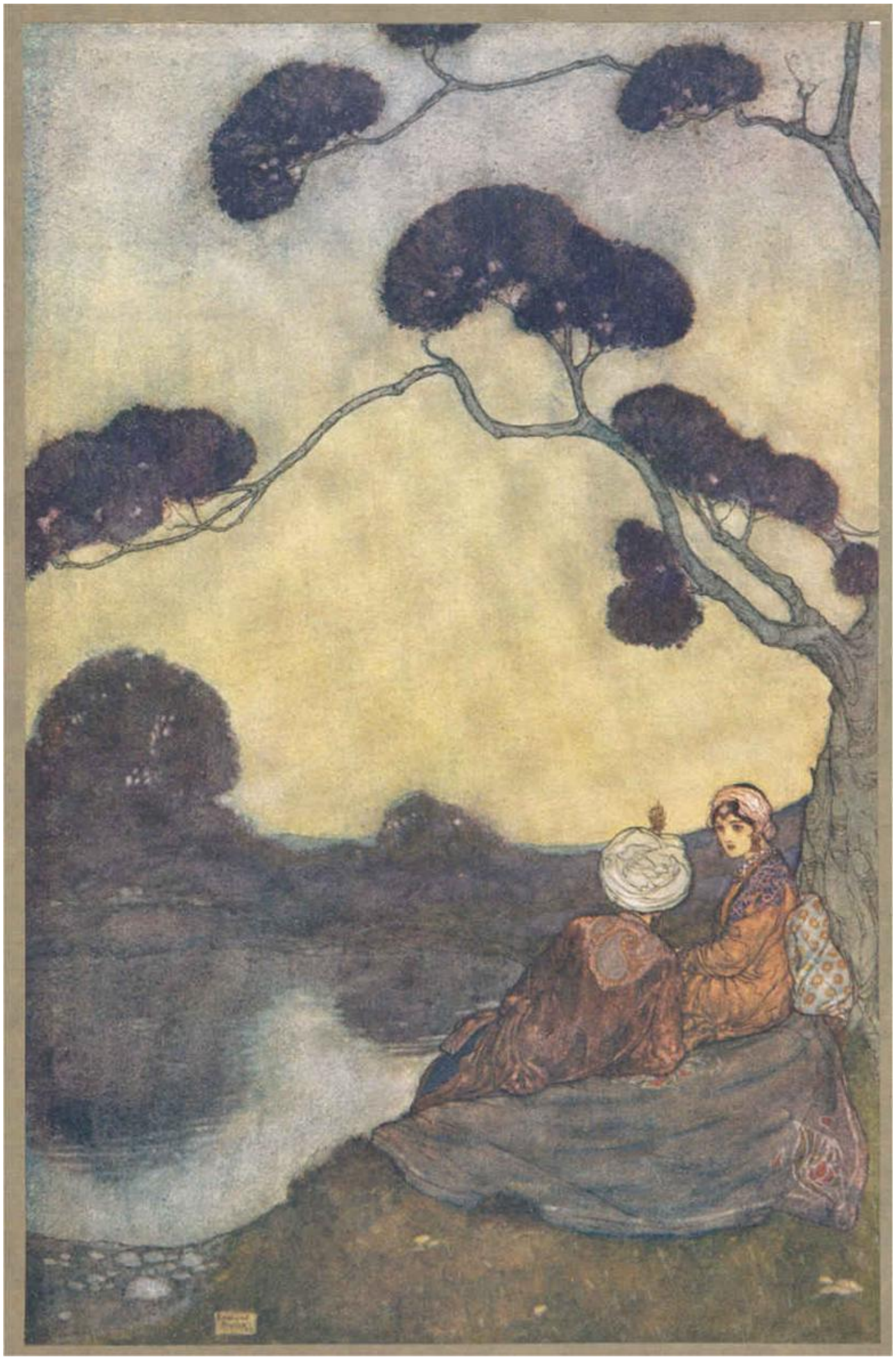
“After that,” he went on, “if you will permit me, and think me worthy of aspiring to the happiness of being your husband, as my father has always said that he would not restrain me in my choice, I should find it no trouble to obtain his leave to return, not as a stranger but as a prince, to ask your father to contract an alliance with mine[27] by marrying us. I am persuaded he will even propose it himself as soon as I have told him how graciously you welcomed a stranger in distress.”

The princess of Bengal was too reasonable to insist he act against his duty. But she was alarmed by how suddenly he meant to depart, and she feared that if he took leave of her so soon, he would forget his promise the moment she was out of sight. To change his mind, she said, “Prince, in proposing a visit to my father, I did not mean to resist these good reasons, which I did not foresee. I would be complicit in the offense if I were to dream of keeping you here. But I cannot approve of your leaving as soon as you seem to suggest. At least grant me the favor I ask, and take the time to get your bearings. Since I was lucky enough to have you land in the kingdom of Bengal, rather than in a desert or on some craggy mountain from which you would have been unable to descend, stay long enough to give a fuller account of our kingdom to the court of Persia.”

The point of these words was, with a longer stay, to induce in the prince a deeper love for her charms. The princess hoped that his desire to go home would then wane, and that he might agree to appear in public and meet the king of Bengal. After the welcome she had given him, the prince of Persia would surely not refuse her the favor she asked. He yielded, and the princess turned her thoughts to enchanting his stay with all the excitements she could devise.

The following days were nothing but concerts and balls, feasts and treats, garden strolls and hunting parties in the palace grounds, which teemed with stags and doe, buck and deer, and other game peculiar to the kingdom of Bengal, which the princess could chase without danger. After the hunt, prince and princess met in a pretty corner of the grounds,[28] where a carpet was spread and cushions were laid for their comfort. Resting there after their violent exercise, they let their talk drift over many subjects. The princess was careful always to steer the conversation back to the grandeur, power, riches, and government of Persia, so that from the prince’s replies she might in turn talk about Bengal and its own blessings, and entice him to extend his stay, but the opposite occurred.

The prince, without embellishment, gave an alluring account of Persia: its beauties and riches, its military force, its trade by sea and land to the farthest parts of the earth, some of which were even unknown to him, the great number of its cities, some just as peopled as that which he had chosen for his residence, where he had palaces furnished and ready to receive him in every season, so that he was at leisure to enjoy a perpetual spring. Before he had finished, the princess had come to consider the kingdom of Bengal very much inferior to that of Persia. When he asked her in turn about the beauties of Bengal, she hesitated to speak.



The prince and princess met in a pretty corner of the grounds. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

At last, the princess gave him satisfaction, but she played down many advantages the kingdom of Bengal was well known to have over Persia. She gave away her desire to follow him home so readily that he believed she would agree to the first proposition he might make, but he thought it would not be proper to make it until he had yielded to her command and stayed with her a little longer.

◆

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

"The strangest story!" said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

For two months,[29] Prince Firuz Shah gave himself entirely to the will of the princess of Bengal, sharing in all the amusements she invented for him, as though he had nothing else to do but spend his whole life with her in this manner. Then he told her seriously that he had neglected his duty for too long and begged her permission to return home, repeating the promise he had made to come back soon in a style worthy of them both, and to ask for her hand from the king of Bengal.

"You may doubt me," added the prince, "and rank me among those false lovers who forget the object of their affection as soon as they are gone. To show you that my passion is real, and that life cannot be sweet to me without so lovely and loving a princess, allow me to ask you the favor of coming home with me."

When the prince saw the princess blush and waver, without any mark of anger, he went on.

"As for my father's consent, and the reception he will give you, let me assure you that he cannot but agree to our union with pleasure. As for the king of Bengal, after all the tender regard he has always shown you, he would be quite different from what you have described, and the enemy of your peace and happiness, if he did not gladly receive the embassy my father will send to ask for your hand in marriage."

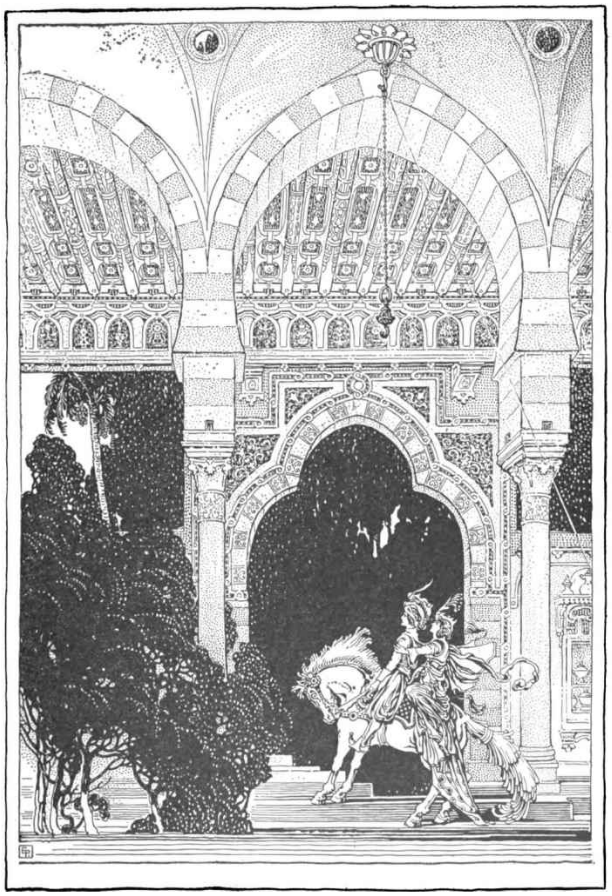
The princess of Bengal said nothing, but her silence and lowered eyes were enough to express her readiness to follow him home. The only difficulty that occurred to her was that the prince did not know how to master the horse, and she feared they would find themselves in the same trouble as when he made his first attempt. But the prince was so insistent that she trust him that she turned her thoughts only to their escape,[30] and how to achieve it without alerting the palace.

In this, she was successful. The next morning, a little before daybreak, when the palace was still in deepest sleep, they went up to the roof, and the prince turned his horse toward Persia, in such a way that the princess could easily get up behind him. When she was settled, with her arms around him for safety, she told him he could go. He turned the peg and the horse took them up into the air.[31]

In two hours, the prince was able to pick out the capital of Persia. He did not make for the main square, or for the palace, but steered them toward a pleasure house a little outside the city. He led the princess into a fine suite of rooms, where he told her that in order to do her the honor she was due, he would go and inform his father of their arrival and then return at once. He gave the order to the housekeeper that the princess should want for nothing.

The prince then asked for a horse to be saddled, and, having mounted it, sent the housekeeper back to the princess with instructions to have her breakfast served without delay. He set off, and he passed through the city to the acclamations of his people, who had not thought they would see him again. The king was in session when his son appeared in the midst of his council, whose members were all in mourning dress. He received his son with embraces and tears of joy and asked what had become of the enchanted horse.

The prince described the danger he had been in when the horse first rose through the air, and how he had arrived at the princess of Bengal's palace, the reception she had given him, the reasons he stayed with her longer than he should have, and the promise he had made to marry her.



The prince and princess take flight. Illustration by Eric Pape from The Arabian Nights: Tales of Wonder and Magnificence *(1923).*

“Knowing that you would not refuse,” he added, “I have brought her with me on the enchanted horse, and I left her waiting in one of your pleasure houses until I could assure her that my promise was not in vain.”

At these words, the prince bowed before his father to win him over, but the king stopped him and, embracing him a second time, said, “My son, not only do I consent to your marriage with the princess of Bengal, but I will go to her myself and thank her, bring her to my palace, and celebrate your wedding before the day is out.”

The king now gave orders for mourning dress to be abandoned and for celebrations to begin with a concert of cymbals, trumpets, drums, and other instruments, and for the Indian man to be released from his prison.

“I detained you,” said the king when he arrived, “so that your life, though not a sufficient price for my grief, might be a ransom for that of my son, whom I have found. Go, take your horse, and never let me see you again.”

The Indian man had learned from his jailers that the prince had brought with him a princess. They told him where he had landed, and where he had left her, and that the king was preparing to bring her to his palace. So he went to the pleasure house as soon as he was out of the king’s presence. He told the housekeeper that he came from the prince of Persia to take the princess of Bengal on his horse to the king, who was waiting in front of his palace to receive her and give the court and city of Shiraz the pleasure of that spectacle.

The housekeeper recognized the man the king had arrested. Seeing him now at liberty, he believed him and presented him to the princess of Bengal, who consented at once[32] to what the prince, as she thought, desired of her.

Delighted with his success, the Indian mounted his horse, took the princess behind him[33] with the housekeeper’s help, turned the peg, and the horse carried them away.

The king of Persia, followed by his court, was on his way to the pleasure house, with the prince a little ahead of him, when the Indian man, in revenge for the injustice he had suffered, appeared above their heads with his prey.

When the king saw the abductor, he stopped. Helpless and appalled, he flung a thousand curses into the air, as did all the courtiers, and everyone else who witnessed his act of insolence. Unmoved by their curses, which barely reached his ears, the Indian man continued on his way, while the king withdrew to his palace, mortified at his own impotence.[34]

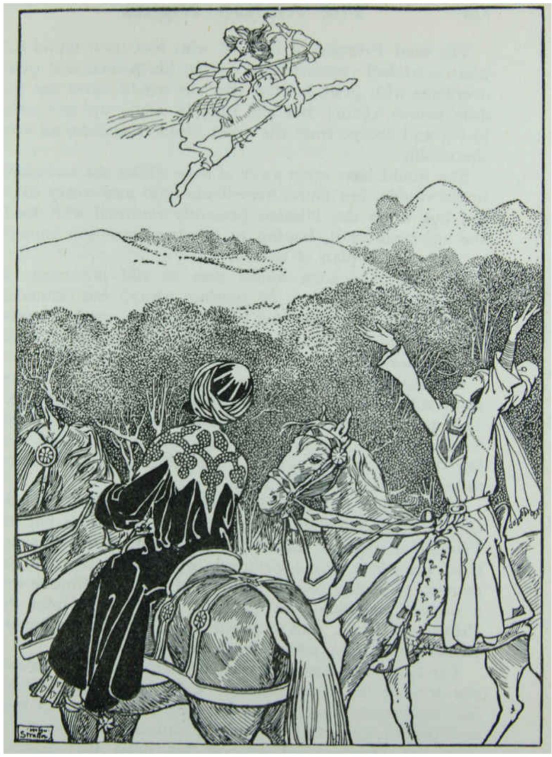
But how Prince Firuz Shah suffered as he saw the princess he loved so dearly spirited away! The sight left him in shock, and before he could decide what to say, the horse had carried them out of sight. What to do?[35] Should he return to his father’s palace, shut himself in his apartment, and abandon himself to grief, without attempting to deliver the princess from her abductor? His love and courage would not allow it. He pressed on to the pleasure house.

When he arrived, the housekeeper, who understood he had been duped, threw himself before him with tears in his eyes and condemned himself to die by his hand.

“Get up,” said the prince. “I do not blame you for the loss of my princess, but only my own foolishness. Let us not lose any time. Go and fetch me a dervish’s outfit,[36] and do not reveal that it is for me.”

Not far from the palace was a convent of dervishes whose sheikh was a friend of the housekeeper’s. He went to find him and told him that a high official of the court, to whom he was much indebted, was in disgrace and needed a means to escape the king’s anger. Thanks to this story, he obtained a complete dervish’s habit, which he carried back to the prince. In disguise, and taking with him a box of jewels he had brought as a gift for the princess of Bengal, he left the pleasure house at nightfall, unsure which way to go but resolved not to return until he had found her.

The Indian man, meanwhile, governed the enchanted horse so well that he arrived the same day in a forest, not far from the capital of the kingdom of Kashmir. Being hungry and supposing the princess was, too, he stopped in a clearing of this forest and left the princess on a grassy spot beside a stream.



“He saw the princess he loved so dearly spirited away!” Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

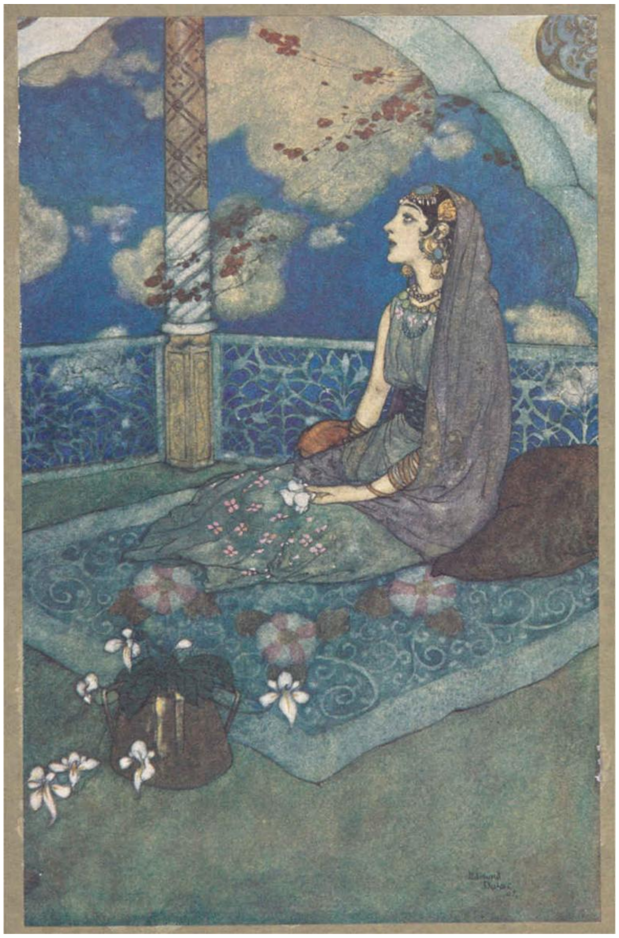
The princess of Bengal, who feared her abductor might turn violent, thought of escaping to shelter in his absence. But as she had eaten very little on her arrival at the pleasure house, she was too faint to think of escape and was forced to stay where she was, resolved to suffer death rather than betray the prince of Persia. When the Indian man returned, she shared his meal without resistance and recovered enough strength to respond with courage to the brutal remarks he began to make. There were threats,[37] then the promise of violence, and she stood up to resist. Her cries attracted a company of horse-men, who in a moment were all around them.

The men happened to be the sultan of Kashmir and his attendants, who were passing through the clearing on their way back from a hunt. The sultan asked the Indian man who he was and what he had done to his companion. The man rudely replied that she was his wife and that their quarrel was nobody’s concern but their own.

The princess, who knew nothing of the person who came so swiftly to her aid, spoke back to her abductor’s lie.

“Lord, whoever you are,” she said, “sent from heaven to deliver me, take pity on a princess, and give no credit to that impostor. God forbid that I should be the wife of so loathsome a man. He is a vile sorcerer, who carried me away from the man I was going to marry and has brought me here on that enchanted horse.”

The princess of Bengal had said enough to persuade the sultan of Kashmir that she spoke the truth. Her beauty, her regal air, her tears were eloquent. She had more to say, but the sultan of Kashmir did not listen. Enraged by the other man’s gall, he had him surrounded and ordered his guards to behead him. The sentence was carried out so rapidly that the man, who had performed the kidnap on his release from prison, had no defense.



The princess of Bengal. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907). Dulac’s illustrations for “The Enchanted Horse” show the inspiration he took from Persian miniatures and Islamic book illustration.*

Delivered from one man’s persecution, the princess of Bengal fell into another, no less cruel. The sultan gave her a horse and led her to his palace, where he set her up in the most splendid apartment after his own. A great number of female slaves and a guard of eunuchs were assigned to her. The sultan himself led her to her rooms, and, without giving her time to thank him, said, “I shall leave you to rest. Tomorrow you will be better able to tell me the circumstances of your strange adventure.” With these words, he withdrew.

* * *

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And Shahrazad agreed.

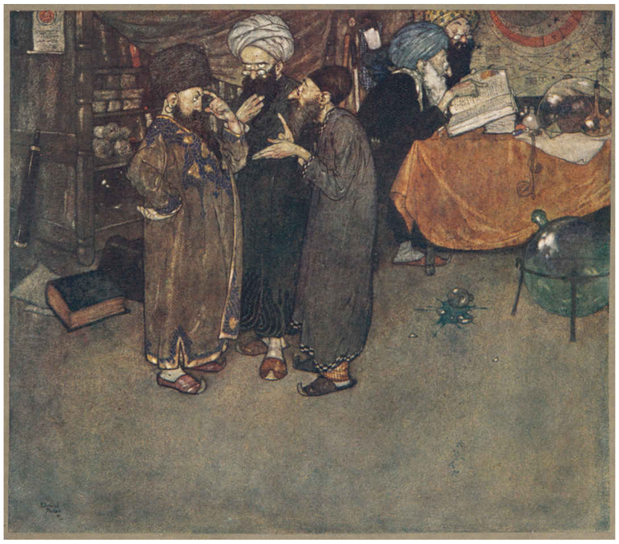
The princess of Bengal was overjoyed to find herself released from a man she could not look at without horror. She flattered herself that the sultan of Kashmir would complete his generosity by sending her back to the prince of Persia once she had told him what he meant to her and asked that favor of him, but she was deceived. The sultan had resolved to marry her the following day, and, as morning broke, he had the news rung out with drums, trumpets, and other joyful instruments.

Their music woke the princess of Bengal, who attributed to them a wholly different cause. When the sultan of Kashmir, who had asked to be alerted as soon as the princess rose, came to see her and said that the concert she heard was in celebration of their wedding, she became so distressed that she fainted.

Her women ran to her assistance, and the sultan took it upon himself to bring her around, but it was a long time before she recovered. When she did, rather than break the promise she had made to Prince Firuz Shah by consenting to the wedding the sultan had announced without consulting her, she decided to pretend that her fainting fit had driven her mad.[38] She began to speak nonsense in front of the sultan, and she even rose as if to pounce on him. She would not stop raving, so he left her with her women and instructed them to look after her and never to leave her alone. His own concern took the form, throughout the day, of sending for her news, and each time the news came back that she was unchanged, or more deranged than before. After dark, her frenzy was worse than in the day, and the sultan spent the night less happy than he had hoped.

For days, the princess kept up her wild talk and other marks of lunacy, until the sultan was forced to assemble all the doctors of his court, describe the disease, and ask whether they knew of a cure.

The doctors consulted each other, agreed that there were several degrees to this illness, that some were curable and others not, and that they could not determine the princess’s condition until they had seen her. The sultan had the eunuchs lead the doctors to her chamber, one after the other, according to their rank.



"The doctors consulted each other." Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

The princess, who foresaw this outcome and feared that if she let the doctors feel her pulse, the least expert of them would know that she was well and that her madness was a feint, flew into such a fever of rage, ready to disfigure them if they came close, that not one was brave enough to approach her.

Some who thought themselves more skillful than the rest, and boasted of judging diseases by sight,[39] prescribed some potions that she took without resistance, knowing that she could be sick for as long as was necessary, and that the potions could do her no harm.

When the sultan of Kashmir saw that the doctors of his court could do nothing for the princess, he called in the wisest and most practiced doctors of the city, who fared no better. Then he sent for the most famous in the kingdom, who met with no better treatment from the princess, and whose potions had no greater effect. At last, he sent envoys to the courts of neighboring princes, with notes on the princess's case to be distributed to the finest doctors, with the promise of a fabulous reward to whoever could cure the patient.

Many doctors undertook the journey, but none could report better luck than all the others, since the health of the princess’s mind did not depend on their skill, but on the will of the princess herself.

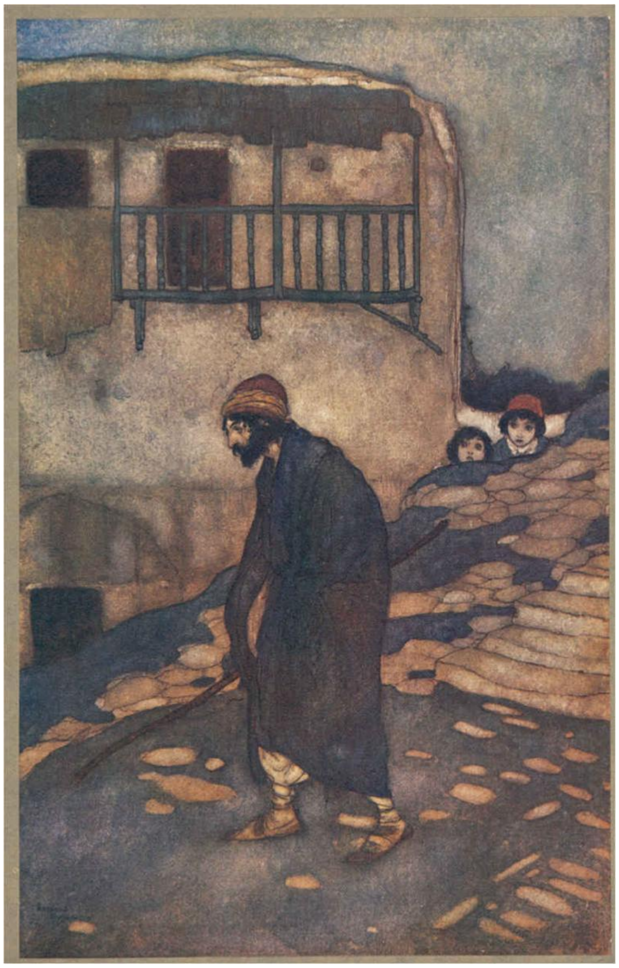
Meanwhile, Prince Firuz Shah, dressed as a dervish, traveled through town and country, not knowing whether he was journeying toward or away from the one he had lost. He asked after her wherever he stopped, until he arrived in a large Indian city where there was much talk of a princess of Bengal who had lost her mind on the day of her marriage to the sultan of Kashmir. Hearing her name, and supposing there could be no other princess of Bengal than the object of his pursuit, he set off for Kashmir. On arriving in the capital, he took a room at a khan, where the same day he was told the story of the princess, and of the fate of the Indian magician who had carried her away on his enchanted horse. At this, the prince had no doubt that this princess was indeed his beloved, and that the sultan was wasting his money seeking to cure her.

Armed with this knowledge, the prince had a doctor’s gown cut for him the next day. The beard he had grown on his travels completed his disguise. Impatient to see his beloved, he went straight to the palace and was presented to the chief officer, to whom he said, rash as it may seem after so many had failed, that he knew of a particular cure that might bring the princess some relief. The officer said he was welcome to try, and that if his cure were to succeed, he could expect a reward worthy of his master’s generosity.

“Wait here,” said the officer. “I will be with you in a moment.”

Some time had passed since any doctor had offered his services, and the sultan had almost lost hope of seeing the princess well enough that they could marry. He ordered the officer to let the new doctor in at once.

The prince of Persia was introduced in his doctor’s guise.[40] The sultan wasted no time on niceties. After telling him that the princess of Bengal could not bear the sight of a doctor without being gripped by a dangerous mania, he led him into a closet with a lattice, through which he could look at her without being seen.



The prince disguised as a dervish. Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

From behind the screen, the prince saw his lovely princess sprawled on her seat, with tears in her eyes, singing a tune in which she lamented the fate that had deprived her of the thing she loved so dearly. The prince had seen enough to understand that her disorder was feigned, and that it was for love of him that she was in such pain. He told the sultan that he had discovered the nature of the princess's ailment, that it was not incurable, but that he would have to speak to her alone.

The sultan had the door to the chamber opened, and Prince Firuz Shah stepped in. When the princess saw a man in doctor's clothing enter, she stood up in a rage, assailing him with threats and curses. Undeterred, he moved toward her, and when he was close enough that he would not be heard by anyone else, he said in a quiet voice, “Princess, I am not a doctor but the prince of Persia, come to set you free.”

By his voice and the features above the beard, the princess of Bengal recognized him and instantly was calm.[41] Across her face spread the kind of joy brought on by what is most desired and least expected. Her surprise deprived her briefly of speech, allowing the prince to tell her the despair he had been in when he saw her taken away, the resolution he had taken never to rest until he got her back, and by what good fortune, after a long and tiresome journey, he had found her in this palace. He then asked the princess to tell him what had happened from the moment of her abduction, so that he might devise how to deliver her from the tyranny of the sultan of Kashmir.

The princess kept her story brief. She told him how she had been delivered from her abductor’s violence by the sultan of Kashmir, who in turn became her oppressor by announcing their wedding the following day without even asking her consent, how this cruel behavior had made her lose consciousness, after which she could see no other path than the one she had taken to preserve herself for a prince to whom she had promised her heart, and to die rather than give herself[42] to a sultan she could never love.

The prince of Persia then asked if she knew what had become of the enchanted horse after its owner’s death.

“After what I told the sultan about it,” said the princess, “I imagine he has kept it safe.”

Convinced that the sultan had the horse, the prince told the princess of his plan to take her back to Persia. They agreed that the princess should change out of her nightclothes the following day to receive the sultan.

The sultan of Kashmir was delighted with the prince of Persia’s success on his first visit. The next day, when the princess received him in such a manner that he believed her cure well underway, he came to regard him as the greatest doctor on earth. Seeing her in this state, he remarked on how pleased he was to see her so close to recovery, and he urged her to seek the help of this most skillful of doctors and let him complete what he had begun so well. Without waiting for an answer, he retired.

The prince of Persia, who accompanied the sultan out of the princess's chamber, asked him whether he might inquire how the princess of Bengal came to find herself alone so far from her country. His question was intended to guide them on to the subject of the enchanted horse, so that he might learn from the sultan's own mouth what he had done with it.

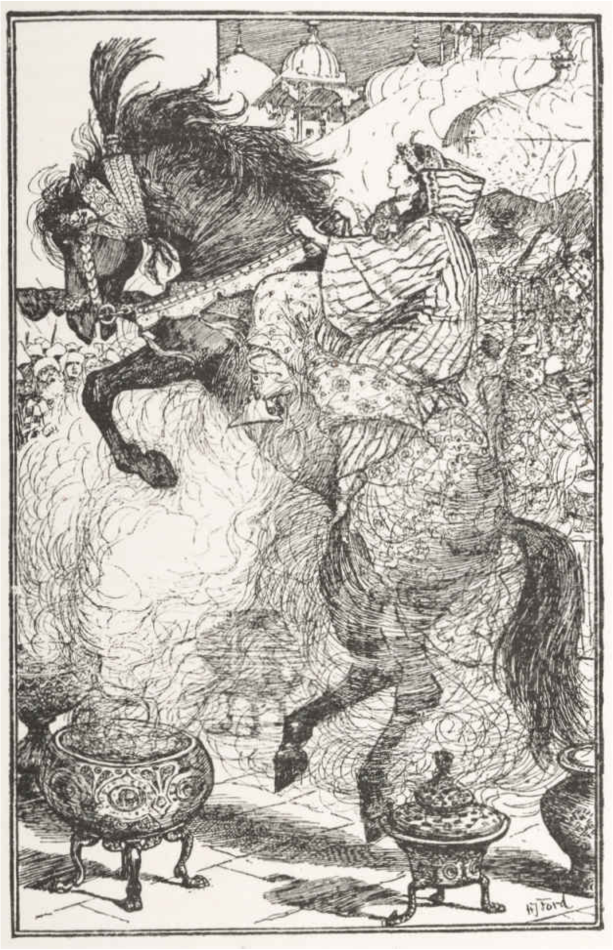
The sultan of Kashmir, guessing nothing of the prince's motive, concealed nothing, and he gave the same account the princess had given him. As for the enchanted horse, he added, he had it carried into his treasure house and kept there as a great curiosity, though he did not know how to use it.

"This information," replied the false doctor, "has given me the means of curing the princess. As she was brought here on a horse, and the horse is enchanted, she has contracted something of the enchantment, which can only be dispelled with certain fragrant oils. If Your Majesty would like to give your court and your people the pleasure of a remarkable sight, let the horse be brought tomorrow to the main square before the palace, and leave the rest to me. I promise to show you, in a few moments, the princess of Bengal as healthy in body and mind as she ever was in her life. For the effect to have the style it deserves, the princess should be dressed as magnificently as possible, with the most precious jewels Your Majesty may own."[43]

The sultan would have agreed to even more difficult things to obtain satisfaction, now that it seemed so close.

Early the next day, the enchanted horse was taken out of the treasure house and placed in the palace square. Word spread through the town that its presence was preparation for something extraordinary, and crowds flocked from every quarter to see it. The palace guards were arranged to prevent disorder and to keep a wide, empty space around the horse.

The sultan appeared and took his place on a scaffold, surrounded by his chief courtiers. Then the princess of Bengal approached the enchanted horse, which her women helped her mount. When she was on the saddle, feet in the stirrups, bridle in hand, the false doctor placed around the horse a ring of vessels full of fire,[44] into each of which he tipped a few drops of fragrant oil. Then, drawing into himself, eyes lowered and hands on heart, he paced three times around the horse, pretending to recite a spell. As the pots began to cough up a thick, fragrant smoke, which enveloped the princess so that neither she nor the horse could be seen, the prince seized his chance,[45] and, jumping up behind her, he reached for the peg and turned it. Just as the horse carried them both into the air, he said these words loud enough for the sultan to hear them, "Sultan of Kashmir, if you wish to marry princesses[46] who come to you for protection, learn first to get their consent."



Escape from the Sultan of Kashmir. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

In this way, the prince of Persia saved the princess of Bengal and carried her the same day to the capital of Persia, where he went straight to his father's palace. The king deferred the marriage only long enough to make the ceremony as splendid as was possible.

When the celebrations were over, the king of Persia’s first care was to name and send an ambassador to the king of Bengal with an account of all that had happened, and to seek his approval of the alliance, which the king of Bengal took as an honor and granted with pleasure.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

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1. Also see notes from Hanna Diyab’s original version of this story in Part III.

2. *Nowruz, or the new day:* Galland inserts a reference to the festival of Nowruz, celebrated as the Persian New Year on the date of the vernal equinox (the beginning of spring). This reference solidifies the Persian setting of the tale, but it seems to require an explanation of the contradiction between a festival rooted in Zoroastrianism and the Islamic context that is supposed to prevail within the *Nights*.

3. *On one of these occasions:* A close analogue of this tale published by the Grimm brothers takes place on the king’s celebration of his name day. Later editions of the Grimms’ story collection would replace this story with one in which a carpenter makes a mechanical fish and a wood turner creates wings that enable humans to fly. A prince will borrow the wings to visit a princess locked in a high tower (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp.86–87).

4. *made so artfully:* In Galland’s notes from Hanna Diyab’s oral recital of this story, the horse is clearly made of wood, which links it to the presumed source in the *Panchatantra* and other medieval stories derived from the same tale tradition. In Chaucer’s “The Squire’s Tale,” the horse is made of brass and is only one of a series of magical gifts brought by a knight from the king of Arabia and India to the court of King Cambuscan. The other gifts include a magic mirror that reveals the minds of others, a ring that allows the bearer to understand the language of birds, and a sword whose cuts can only be healed by its own healing touch.

5. *“reach it at once by riding it through the air”:* The enchanted horse represents the dream of flight, but also the possibility of almost instantaneous transport to distant lands.

6. *the Indian man turned a peg beneath the horse’s neck:* Robert Irwin identifies the flying horse with the other mechanical automatons that appear in the *Nights*, such as the brass oarsman in “The Tale of the Third Dervish.” He suggests that medieval Arab culture inherited an interest in

such ingenious mechanical devices from the ancient Greeks and continued to develop more of them. Popular superstition claimed that automatons were powered by magic and served as guards over hidden treasure (*Arabian Nights: A Companion*, p. 189).

7. *“I never doubted that Your Highness”:* The dialogue in this story is largely improvised by Galland; in this case, it captures the flattery and sycophancy that he associates with court culture. Galland might have drawn from his experiences in the Ottoman world, but this is just as likely to reflect French court culture.

8. *wondered whether he ought to:* Diyab’s telling of this tale suggests that the king struggles to choose between his desire for the miraculous horse and his daughter’s future happiness. In his version of the story, Galland develops this element through dialogue.

9. *“the strangest and most exciting thing on earth”:* The king shows himself to be a collector of curious and wondrous objects, and Hanna Diyab’s own familiarity with the culture of European collecting through his association with Paul Lucas may explain why he chose to tell this particular story to his European listener.

10. *“always takes its rider where he wishes to go”:* As with other magical devices in the *Nights*, this one operates according to the wishes of the person who possesses it.

11. *the mountains appeared to melt into the plains:* The narrator imagines how such a view from above would look—long before the days of air travel. This is the vision from above that was gifted to King Solomon, who, according to Islamic tradition, could command the winds and transport his armies on a flying carpet.

12. *Few but Prince Firuz Shah would have ventured:* Galland tries to emphasize the heroic qualities of the prince in an effort to conform to conventions of the medieval romance. He also adds a moment of interiority that brings this character more in line with modern European expectations.

13. *The prince moved toward it on tiptoe:* This approach toward the sleeping princess is mirrored in Douglas Fairbanks’s *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), which also combines motifs from “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu” and “Aladdin” to form the basic visual vocabulary of “the Orient” in American films.

14. *so striking that he fell in love:* The notes from Diyab’s storytelling suggest that the princess fell in love with the prince at first sight. The immediacy of their affection mirrors the plot of “The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur,” part of the original core of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

15. *he tugged it very gently:* The version of this story preserved in *A Hundred and One Nights* offers a more dramatic scene: “[H]e saw that it was a girl, as radiant as the shining moon, covered by a fabric of gold. At the sight of her he lost his mind and cared for nothing else. He climbed up on the bed and sat by her head, contemplating her beauty. Unable to control himself, he kissed her forehead” (p. 319).

16. *where she liked to come and enjoy the country air:* In variants of this tale, the king builds the princess this remote palace to protect her from the attention of suitors. In some European

versions, the suitor must impersonate the Angel Gabriel (Jibreel) to gain entry to her tower and seduce her (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 87).

17. *“Hospitality, compassion, and politeness”:* In an apparent attempt to draw out the story, Galland inserts these scenes demonstrating the graciousness and wealth of the princess’s kingdom. The princess reacts quite differently in the version of this story in *A Hundred and One Nights*. Startled, she demands to know if the intruder is human or jinn, and how he entered her chamber. When she concludes that he must be the man her father has chosen for her to marry, and he agrees with the lie, she welcomes him, “overcome with joy and delight, for she saw how handsome and attractive he was” (pp. 320–21).

18. *The princess’s women:* The confusion of the princess’s attendants is a pale version of the suspicions displayed in the tale included in *A Hundred and One Nights*. In that earlier version of this story, the princess’s attendants are quick to point out that this was not the man chosen by the king to be her husband, for that man was not fit to be the slave of this handsome stranger (p. 321).

19. *whose mind was filled with the charm, wit, courtesy:* Unwilling to follow Diyab’s suggestion that the two characters had simply fallen in love at their first meeting, Galland attempts to show the young woman’s developing feelings for the foreign prince and her efforts to impress her suitor. The episodes that follow contain some of the most stereotypical descriptions of women’s behavior in the tales that were added in the French translation.

20. *the largest and brightest diamonds:* In this section, references to precious jewels and luxurious fabrics emphasize the marvels of “the Orient” for the reader, though Diyab and Galland may have both drawn from their experience of the French court.

21. *she sat on the sofa, and the prince did the same:* These passages strike the reader as a particularly European version of courting, inserted by the French translator to extend the action.

22. *“I am already your slave”:* This language of slavery—matched by the princess’s assurances that the prince has the same freedom he would have in Persia—does not appear to have been in the original story told to Galland by Hanna Diyab, unless Galland remembered this element later. This may be Galland’s way of navigating discourses that associated Eastern empires with slavery.

23. *a great number of the princess’s slave girls:* Galland again inserts a scene of feasting and music that matches stereotypes of “Oriental” luxury, and he insists on the entertainment provided by the slave girls in a way that will be repeated in many later representations of the stories of the *Nights*. There is little connection, however, between these slaves and the character of Marjana in “The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,” or the other resourceful female slaves in the Arabic story collection.

24. *“far outshines it in beauty and riches”:* This conversation on the comparative qualities of the palaces of Bengal and Persia is another addition by Galland.

25. *maintain the decorum becoming a princess:* As Galland draws out the story, he insists that the princess demonstrate the dignity he associates with her position rather than reveal her own desires and act upon them.

26. *“I would be unworthy of the tenderness he has always shown me”:* As in “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu,” the significance of the prince’s relationship with his father is emphasized and his filial duties acknowledged.

27. *“ask your father to contract an alliance with mine”:* The political significance of marriage is constantly emphasized in this story, even though it is a love story at its heart. This may be a result of Galland’s desire to insert his own ideas about the nature of marriages within the ruling class.

28. *met in a pretty corner of the grounds:* Galland manufactures another opportunity to include a set piece featuring the grandeur of the palace and its gardens and emphasizing the immense wealth of kingdoms in the East.

29. *For two months:* The summary of Diyab’s story suggests that the prince stayed for forty days with the princess.

30. *she turned her thoughts only to their escape:* In this moment, it appears that the princess takes the initiative in the same way that Princess Badr al-Budur does in “Aladdin,” but there are few details provided.

31. *the horse took them up into the air:* The romantic image of the prince escaping with the princess on a flying horse was reproduced again and again by the illustrators of the *Arabian Nights*. The medieval romanticism of such visions was mocked by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, where, in a cruel joke, the knight-errant is made to believe that he is flying into the heavens on a wooden horse.

32. *who consented at once:* Not so in the version in *A Hundred and One Nights*, where the princess is startled that the prince has sent her so ugly a messenger. The magician must reassure her that “he would not have sent me if I were not this ugly to look at. He’s far too jealous and protective for that” (p. 331).

33. *took the princess behind him:* The Indian magician abducts the princess on the flying horse. In the Italian story of “Bellisandra and Livoretto” by Straparola (which Ruth Bottigheimer suggests is a source for Galland’s tale), the prince abducts the princess of Damascus at the behest of the evil sultan of Egypt. His magical flying horse is neither metal nor wood, but simply possessed of magical powers (which include the ability to talk).

34. *mortified at his own impotence:* The king in this tale has been the inspiration for a series of ineffectual sultans in American films based on the *Arabian Nights*. Alexander Korda’s *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) drew heavily on this tale for its plot. It includes a toy-obsessed sultan who is tempted by the offer of a mechanical flying horse by the evil Jaffar and therefore agrees to the marriage of his daughter to the vizier, when she is really in love with the young sultan of “Bagdad.” Disney’s animated *Aladdin* drew on these character types.

35. *What to do?:* Galland inserts an inner monologue to give readers access to the thoughts of the prince. This kind of addition has often been lauded as a way of adapting the stories of the *Nights* to the conventions of modern European literature.

36. *“fetch me a dervish’s outfit”:* Diyab has the prince adopt the disguise of a dervish as he goes on a quest for love rather than spiritual enlightenment. There are echoes of the tales of the

dervishes in “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” where each of the three princes takes on the role of a dervish after losing everything.

37. *There were threats:* Galland tries to avoid dealing directly with the threat of rape in this scene. His notes from his journal indicate that Diyab’s story suggests that the kidnapper “urges the princess to give in to his desire, [but] she resists.”

38. *she decided to pretend that her fainting fit had driven her mad:* This plot element is reminiscent of the behavior of Budur in another story from the *1001 Nights*, “The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur,” where the princess would rather be declared insane and kept confined than contemplate marrying someone other than her true love.

39. *boasted of judging diseases by sight:* It is unclear whether this element comes from Diyab or Galland, but it is true that Paul Lucas, Diyab’s traveling companion, bragged that he could diagnose someone’s illness just from looking at them.

40. *The prince of Persia was introduced in his doctor’s guise:* This plot element also mirrors the *Nights* “Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur,” in which Qamar assumes the disguise of a doctor to get access to his beloved Princess Budur.

41. *recognized him and instantly was calm:* The two characters delight in their shared deception in the version of this tale in *A Hundred and One Nights*: “She struck her face and screamed even louder, complete deception on her part, for she was so relieved to see the prince. All the while he made signs to her, urging her, ‘More!’” (p. 337).

42. *to die rather than give herself:* This typical romantic motif resembles that in Straparola’s story of “Bellisandra and Livoretto,” which Bottigheimer suggests may have served as a model for Galland. In that story, Bellisandra, the daughter of the king of Damascus, is pursued by the sultan of Egypt. As he lays siege to her city, she declares that she would rather die by her own hand than be forced to become the wife of such a man. She eventually marries the prince of Tunis, Livoretto, after he successfully completes a series of trials.

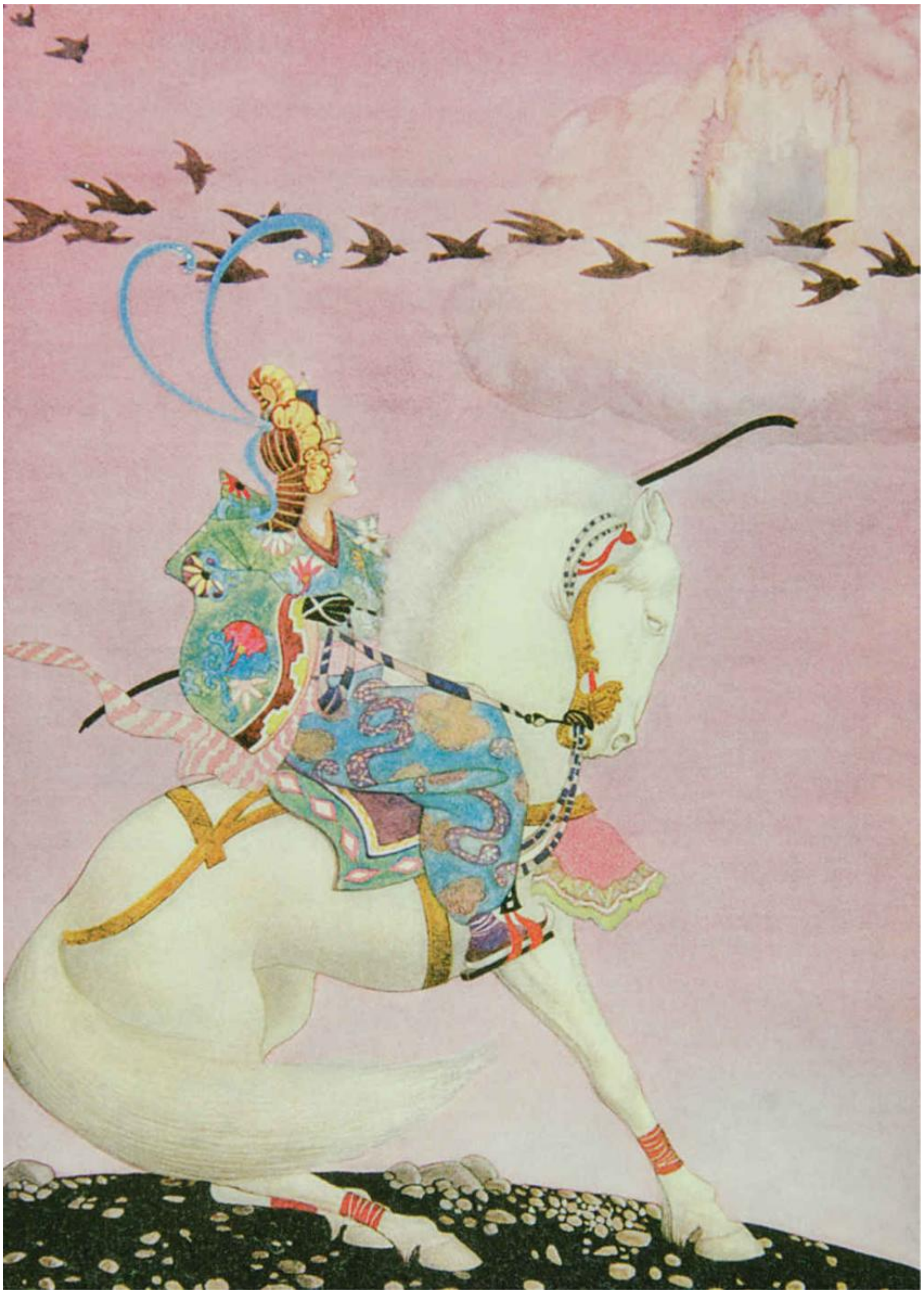
43. *“with the most precious jewels Your Majesty may own”:* This reference to precious jewels comes from the original summary of the story told by Diyab. While Galland may have added riches to some of Diyab’s tales to increase their appeal for French readers, the theft of the jewels in this story has a clearer motivation and offers a measure of payback for the sultan’s treatment of the princess.

44. *ring of vessels full of fire:* Galland elaborates in this scene based on the essential elements of spell casting present in other stories of the *Nights*.

45. *the prince seized his chance:* In some variants of this tale, the princess and the prince are under threat of immediate execution when they seize their opportunity to perform a spectacular escape by means of the magic horse (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 87).

46. *“if you wish to marry princesses”:* Galland seemed to believe that the stories of the *Nights* had to deliver morals to their readers, and he often adds such suggestions to the stories. The prince in the version of this story in *A Hundred and One Nights* offers a more sarcastic parting

shot: “Long may your realm and your hospitality continue.” Deprived of his bride, the king faints when the lovers are out of sight and dies a few days later (p. 341).



Aladdin views his palace in the sky. Illustrator Thomas Mackenzie took his cue from the Chinese setting of the story as he constructed a fantastical "Orient" for this retelling of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp." Illustration from Aladdin in Rhyme *by Arthur Ransome (London, 1919).*

ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

One of the most famous fairy tales in the world, “Aladdin” has been retold time and time again since it first appeared in volumes nine and ten of Antoine Galland’s Les mille et une nuits *in 1710. The tale’s lasting appeal seems to rest on its ability to encompass both the child’s dream of wish fulfillment and the terrors of coming-of-age. The story type is familiar from both Arabic folklore and European fairy tales. Aladdin represents the humble hero lifted to great heights by the possession of a magic talisman—a lamp that allows him to command the supernatural power of a jinni. The tale provides all the elements of a fabulous fairy tale: the machinations of an evil magician, the wonders of a treasure vault, a beautiful and ingenious princess, a palace that appears and disappears in an instant, and the ultimate achievement of both wealth and power.*

Despite several efforts to fabricate an Arabic version of the story that predates this published version, the story’s first known telling must be credited to Hanna Diyab, who gave the story to Galland on May 5, 1709. Scholars such as Marina Warner suggest that the tale resembles European narratives of social ascension that feature talismans and spoken charms, but Robert Irwin stresses the story’s roots in the narrative traditions of the Arab world (see “Afterword”). *Aladdin bears a striking resemblance to other protagonists in the* One Thousand and One Nights *who begin their stories as lazy youths but somehow are favored with luck. The tales of “Ali the Cairene,” “Abu Muhammad the Lazy,” and “Maʿruf the Cobbler” all* *tell a similar story in which the unpromising protagonist is gifted with an opportunity to achieve wealth and power. The message seems to be that anyone can experience such a miraculous change of fortune.*

The tale we now know as "Aladdin" is a hybrid creation in which both the original narrative of Diyab and the additions of the French translator are discernible. The story undoubtedly possesses a glamorous veneer that can be credited in part to Galland's attempt to ensure that it contained the palatial architecture, precious jewels, and elaborate ceremonies that readers expected from the Arabian Nights. *His effort to draw morals out of the tale—for the edification of his readers as well as for the mythical sultan who spent his nights enraptured by Shahrazad's tales—is also on display.*

The tale itself, however, in its focus on the plight of the poor protagonist trying to find his own place in the world, resonates strongly with the experiences of the nineteen-year-old Syrian storyteller who delivered the tale to Galland. Diyab's journey to Paris in the company of a French collector of precious objects taught him something of the allure of treasure and the magic of gemstones and talismans. His trip to Versailles to be presented at the court of Louis XIV had also given him a recent view of the glorious palace architecture of a powerful king. Perhaps he too dreamed that his life would be transformed by destiny—and that he would receive the position in the king's library of Arabic manuscripts that he had been promised and live out his days in the comfort of Paris.

The dreams embodied in Aladdin's story are powerful enough to have produced a multitude of adaptations and rewritings. New generations are often introduced to the tale in children's storybooks or popular pantomimes during the Christmas season. Later writers and screenwriters were not always satisfied with the story's suggestion that it was the lamp that made the man, however, and instead inserted indications that Aladdin had always possessed some special quality that would make him deserving of the power represented by the lamp. Even the 1992 animated Disney film portrays Aladdin as "a diamond in the rough." The original tale is more difficult to force into the straitjacket of children's moralistic tales. In the end, it is destiny in the form of a lamp that transforms the naive youth into a wise and wealthy statesman worthy of a princess and the trust of a kingdom.

As she finished her story, Shahrazad promised the sultan another no less enchanting one the following day. Her sister, Dunyazad, made sure to remind her before daybreak of her promise, and said the sultan was ready to hear her. Shahrazad did not keep him waiting. This is the story she told him.

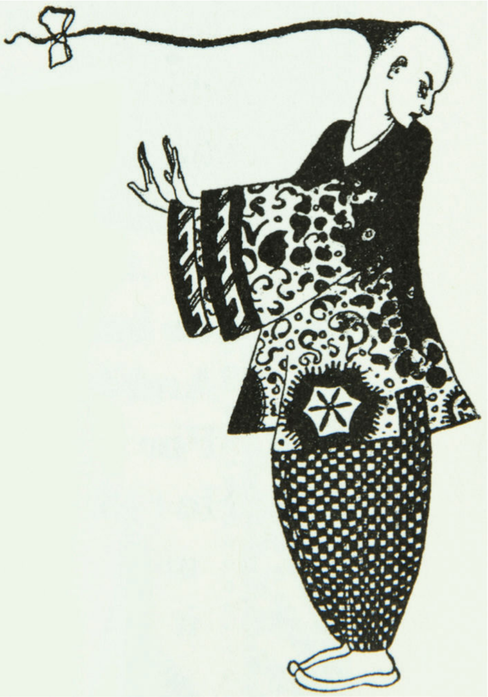
THE TAILOR’S SON

Majesty, in the capital of one of China’s vast and wealthy kingdoms,[1] whose name escapes me at present, there lived a tailor named Mustafa, who had no other distinction but his craft. This tailor was very poor,[2] and his work scarcely earned him enough to feed himself, his wife, and a son that God had given them.

The son, whose name was Aladdin, had received a careless upbringing, which instilled in him wild tendencies: He grew to be cruel, stubborn, and rebellious.[3] After a certain age, his parents could not keep him indoors, and he spent his days playing in the streets and public squares with idle boys, some even younger than himself.

When Aladdin was old enough to learn a craft, his father, who knew only his own, took him into the shop and tried to teach him needlework. But neither gentleness nor punishment could still his son’s wandering mind.[4] As soon as the tailor had his back turned, Aladdin would escape and stay out until evening, and, unable to change his ways, Mustafa was forced to abandon his son to his dissipation. This pained him, and the grief of failing to guide his son to his duty brought about such a violent illness that he died a few months later.[5]

Aladdin’s mother, seeing her son renounce his father’s craft, closed the shop and had all his tools melted into silver, which, together with the little she earned spinning cotton, kept them both alive.



“[Aladdin] grew to be cruel, stubborn, and rebellious.” Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

No longer restrained by the fear of his father, and so untroubled by his mother that he turned on her at the slightest rebuke, Aladdin gave in fully to his dissolute ways.[6] He surrounded himself with boys of his own age and threw himself into their games, idling the years away until he was fifteen, without the slightest curiosity for anything at all and with no thought of what he might become. Then one day, while Aladdin was playing in a square with his band of vagabonds, a stranger passing by stopped to look at him.

This stranger was a remarkable sorcerer, whom the authors of this story have called the Maghrebi magician,[7] and that is what I shall call him, since he was indeed from North Africa, and had arrived only two days before.

Whether or not the magician, who knew the art of reading faces,[8] had seen in Aladdin’s features the answer to his journey’s quest, he inquired discreetly about his family, his condition, and his character. When he had learned all he wished to know, he approached the young man and steered him a little way from his friends.

“My boy,” he said, “isn’t your father Mustafa the tailor?”

“He was,” replied Aladdin, “but he has been dead a long time.”

At these words, the magician threw his arms around Aladdin and kissed him many times, sighing and full of tears. Aladdin asked him why he wept.

“Ah, my boy,” cried the magician, “how could I not? I am your uncle,[9] and your father was my dear brother. My travels have kept me away for many years, and just as I return in the hope of seeing him again and giving him the pleasure of my homecoming, you tell me he is dead. It aches to be deprived of that consolation. But I see his face in yours, and that, at least, is some comfort.”

Reaching for his purse, he asked Aladdin where his mother lived, and when the answer came, the magician handed him a pocketful of change.

“Go to your mother,” he said, “give her my compliments, and say that if time permits, I will visit her tomorrow, so that I may see the house where my dear brother lived and died.”

When the magician took his leave of the nephew he had just invented, Aladdin ran to his mother’s house, pleased with his pocketful of coins.

“Mother,” he asked, “do I have any uncles?”

“None,” replied his mother, “neither on your father’s side nor on mine.”

“And yet I have just seen a man who claims to be my father’s brother. He even set about kissing me, weeping, when I told him my father was dead. If you don’t believe me, look at what he gave me. He sends you his compliments and said he would come and greet you in person tomorrow, to see the house where my father lived and died.”

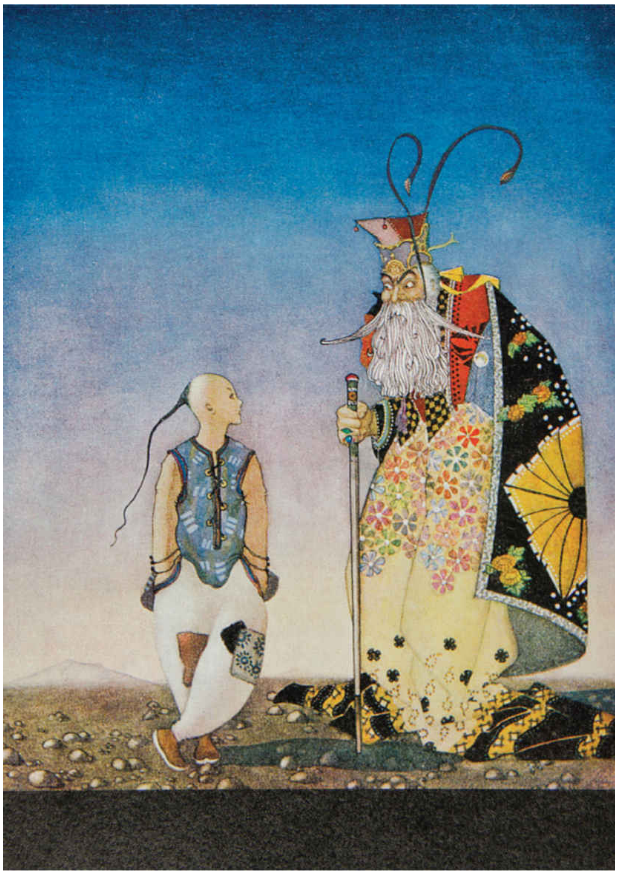
“It is true,” said his mother, “that your father had a brother, but he died a long time ago, and I never heard him mention another.”

The following day, the magician approached Aladdin a second time, as he was playing in another part of town with other children. Again he embraced him, and, handing him two gold coins,[10] he said: “Take these to your mother, and tell her to expect me for supper this evening. But first, tell me where the house is.” He told him, and the magician let him go.

Aladdin brought the gold coins home to his mother. She spent the money on provisions and the day preparing supper, and, as she lacked much of the tableware she would need, she went to borrow some from the neighbors. When it was ready, she said to Aladdin: “Your uncle may not know how to find us. Go out and lead him here if you see him.” He was ready to leave when there was a knock at the door. He opened it and the magician entered, laden with wine and fruit. These he gave to Aladdin, and, after greeting his mother, he asked her to show him the place on the sofa where Mustafa used to sit. She showed him, and he fell upon the spot with kisses and tears.

“My poor brother!” he cried. “How sad I am to have come too late to embrace you once more before you left us!” Though Aladdin’s mother offered, he could not bring himself to sit in the same place. “I would not dare,” he said, “but allow me to sit across from it, here, and imagine his presence among us.” Aladdin’s mother did not insist and let him sit where he pleased.

When the magician had chosen his seat, he spoke.



The magician approaches Aladdin in the street. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

"My dear sister," he began, "do not be surprised that this is our first meeting. It has been forty years since I left this country, which is mine no less than it was my late brother's. In that time, I have traveled to India, to Persia, to Arabia,[11] to Syria, and to Egypt, and stayed in their finest cities, before moving on to the Maghreb, where I settled. In the end, since it is natural, however far one strays from the land of one's birth, never to let its memory fade, I formed such a strong desire to see my country again and to embrace my dear brother, while I still had the strength to undertake the journey, that I made my preparations and set off without delay. I will say nothing of the time it has taken me, nor of all the obstacles I met and the trouble I suffered to arrive here. I will only tell you that nothing has caused me more distress on my travels than the news of my brother's death. I recognized his features in my nephew's face, and that is how I picked him out from the other children. He will have told you how I received the dreadful news, but we must praise God for all things. I am comforted, at least, to see his face in that of his son."

The magician, seeing the mother falter at the memory of her husband, changed the subject, and, turning to Aladdin, asked him for his name.

"My name is Aladdin."

"Well, Aladdin, how do you occupy yourself? Do you have a craft?"

Unsettled by the question, Aladdin averted his eyes. His mother answered instead.

"Aladdin is lazy,"[12] she said. "His father did all he could to teach him his trade and got nowhere. Since he died, despite all my efforts, my son's only occupation has been to roam the streets where you found him, playing with the other children, though he is no longer a child. Unless you can talk some shame into him, I despair of what he will become. He knows that his father had nothing to his name, and that for all my spinning I struggle to feed us both.[13] One day I will show him the door and send him out into the world alone."

At these words Aladdin's mother began to weep. "This is no good, my boy," said the magician. "You must think of earning your keep. There are all kinds of trades, and you are bound to find one you like more than the others. Perhaps what suited your father is not right for you. There is no need to hide anything from me: I only want to help." As Aladdin said nothing, he went on. “If you are reluctant to learn a craft and wish to become a gentleman, I can set you up as a cloth merchant.[14] You would have your own shop, and you would make an honorable living. Consider it, and tell me frankly what you think. You will always find me ready to keep my promise.”

The offer flattered Aladdin, who disliked manual work, and who was not such a fool that he did not know that the shops in question were clean and sought-after, and their merchants well dressed and well respected. He declared to the magician, whom he now regarded as his uncle, that he felt more drawn to the cloth trade than to any other, and that he would always be indebted to him for his kindness. “Since you like the idea,” said the magician, “I will take you with me tomorrow and have you dressed in splendid new clothes worthy of the richest merchants in this city. The following day, we shall set you up in your shop.”

Aladdin’s mother, who until then had not believed that the magician might be her husband’s brother, banished all doubt[15] after hearing what he pledged to do for her son. She thanked him for his good intentions and, after urging Aladdin to show himself worthy of all the blessings his uncle had promised, served supper. Their talk ran on the same subject all through the meal, until the magician, who saw that it was late, took leave of the mother and her son.

The next morning, he returned as promised, and took Aladdin off with him to a merchant who sold clothes made from the finest fabrics and cut for every age and circumstance. He asked for Aladdin’s size, and, after setting aside the most beautiful items and discarding the others, told him to take his pick. Charmed by his new uncle’s generosity, Aladdin chose an outfit, and the magician paid for it without haggling.

When Aladdin saw himself so magnificently dressed from head to toe,[16] he thanked his uncle in every way he knew, and the magician repeated his promise never to abandon him. He took him to the most fashionable parts of the city, where the shops of rich merchants were, and when they came to the street with the grandest shops selling the very finest cloth, he said to Aladdin: “As you will soon be a merchant like these, you should acquaint yourself with them, and they with you.” Then he took him to the most impressive mosques, to the khans where the foreign merchants lodged,[17] and to those parts of the sultan’s palace that they had liberty to enter. At last, having seen their fill of the city, they came to the khan where the magician had taken a room. They were met by a party of merchants he had befriended since he arrived, and whom he had invited to dinner in order to introduce them to his so-called nephew.

The feast went on until evening. At length, Aladdin made his excuses, and the magician insisted on walking him to his mother’s door. When she saw her son in his new clothes, she let out a cry of rapture and a thousand blessings on the magician.

“Dear brother!” she said. “I know that my son does not deserve your gifts, and that he would be unworthy of them if he did not rise to the confidence you have placed in him. As for me, let me thank you again with all my soul, and wish you a life long enough to be a witness to his gratitude, for which he could find no better expression than to govern himself as you have proposed.”

“Aladdin is a good boy,” the magician replied. “He listens to me, and I believe we will make something of him.[18] My only worry is that I cannot fulfill what I promised to do tomorrow, as it is Friday and the shops will be closed, and we cannot hope to rent and furnish one of our own while the other merchants have a mind only for leisure. We will put off our business to Saturday, but let us still keep our appointment tomorrow. I will take him to the gardens where the fashionable crowd likes to be seen. I do not think he knows much of the entertainments they enjoy there. He has tasted so far only childish pleasures. Now he must see those of men.”[19] Then the magician went on his way. Aladdin, elated by his new clothes, was now thrilled at the thought of seeing the gardens outside the city, for he had never left its walls,[20] nor glimpsed its surroundings.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

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“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

A RING AND A LAMP

ALADDIN ROSE and dressed early the next morning so he would be ready when his uncle came to fetch him. After he waited for what seemed a long time, impatience sent him to the door. He stood on the threshold, hoping to see his uncle arrive, and when he spotted the magician, he called good-bye to his mother and ran to meet him.

The magician was full of tenderness for Aladdin. “Let us go, my boy,” he said with a smile. “I want to show you some wonderful things.”[21] They passed through a gate that led to a series of splendid houses, or rather palaces, each with magnificent gardens that could be entered freely. Before each palace they passed, the magician asked Aladdin whether he found it beautiful, and Aladdin, seeing the next one loom into view, would answer ahead of the question: “Uncle, that palace is even lovelier than all those we have seen.” Still they pressed on into the countryside, and the wily magician, who wanted to go even further to carry out his design, stepped inside one of the gardens. He went to sit by a large fountain,[22] which the nostrils of a bronze lion supplied with fresh water, and feigned exhaustion. “You must be just as tired as I am,” he said to Aladdin. “Let us catch our breath here. We shall need all our strength for the rest of our walk.”

While they were sitting there, the magician unfolded a handkerchief that hung from his belt, where he had concealed all sorts of cakes and fruits, and which he spread out on the edge of the fountain. He shared a cake with Aladdin and let him choose from the fruit. As they ate, he advised the boy to part ways with his childish friends and instead to seek the company of wise and cautious men. “Soon,” he said, “you will be a man like them,[23] and it is never too early to learn from their example.” When they had finished their meal, they got up and proceeded through the gardens, which were set apart from each other only by the slim furrows that marked their borders without impeding access; such was the good faith of the city’s inhabitants that they needed no other boundaries to protect themselves from trouble. By degrees, the magician led Aladdin out of the gardens and into the countryside, until they had almost reached the mountains.

Aladdin, who had not walked so far in his life, was weary.

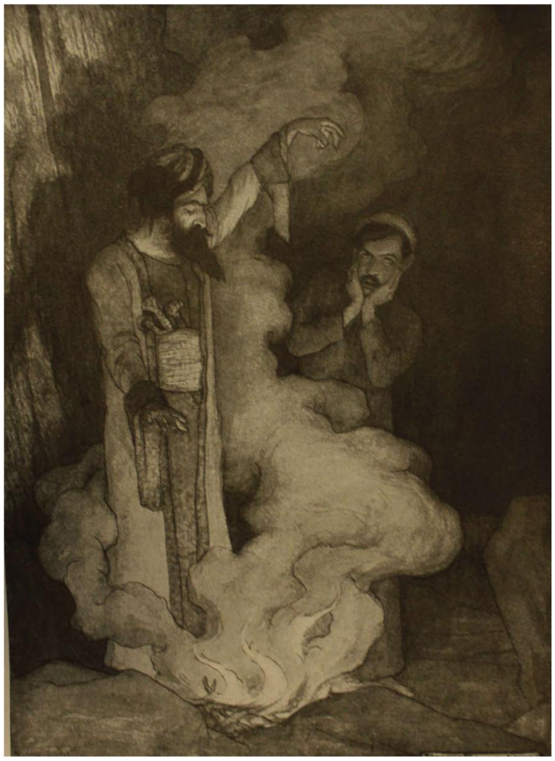
“Uncle,” he asked, “where are we going? We have left the gardens far behind us, and all I see now are mountains. If we walk any farther, I am afraid I would not have the strength to go back to the city.”

“Take courage, my boy,” said the false uncle, “I want to show you another garden, which outshines all those you have seen. It is only a few paces from here. When we arrive, you will tell me yourself what a shame it would have been to have missed it, having come so close.”

Aladdin yielded, and the magician took him much farther still, beguiling him all the while with stories.[24]

At last they reached a narrow pass between two mountains. It was to this strange place that the magician had sought to lure Aladdin; now he could realize the dream that had brought him from the edge of Africa all the way to China. “We will go no farther,” said the magician. “I want to show you rare and wonderful things.[25] But first, gather up the driest brushwood you can find while I kindle a fire.”

The undergrowth was so dense that Aladdin had soon collected enough in the time the magician took to light a flame. As the wood burned, the magician scattered a few drops of fragrant oil over the fire.[26] A thick column of smoke rose up, which he swayed this way and that with a sweep of his hand, muttering words Aladdin did not understand.



A thick column of smoke rose up. Illustration by Fernand Schultz-Wettel from Tusen och en natt *(1921).*

At that moment, the earth trembled and cracked, revealing beneath its surface a stone, about a foot square, laid flat and fitted with a bronze ring by which it could be lifted. Aladdin, terrified, tried to flee, but the magician detained him, and in his anger struck him so hard across the cheek that he fell to earth. There flowed from him such a quantity of blood it seemed that his front teeth had been knocked clean out of his mouth.

“Uncle!” poor Aladdin cried, trembling and tearful, “what have I done to deserve your blows?”

“I have my reasons,” replied the magician. “I am your uncle; I may as well be your father. You are not to talk back to me. But fear nothing,” he said more softly. “All I ask is your obedience, if you are to be worthy of the great reward[27] that will soon be yours to enjoy.”

These promises appeared to ease Aladdin’s fears. When the magician saw that he had regained his trust, he went on.

“Beneath this stone is a treasure destined for you, which will make you richer than the greatest kings of the earth. No one but you is allowed to touch the treasure; even I am forbidden from going near it. But to find it, you must do exactly as I say."

At the thought of the treasure, Aladdin forgot his fears. "I will obey," he said. "What should I do?"

"Take that ring," said the magician, "and lift up the stone."

"But I am not strong enough," said Aladdin. "I need your help."

"You do not need anyone. Besides, nothing would happen if I helped you. You must lift it alone. Say the names of your father and grandfather[28] when you take hold of it, and you will find it no weight at all."

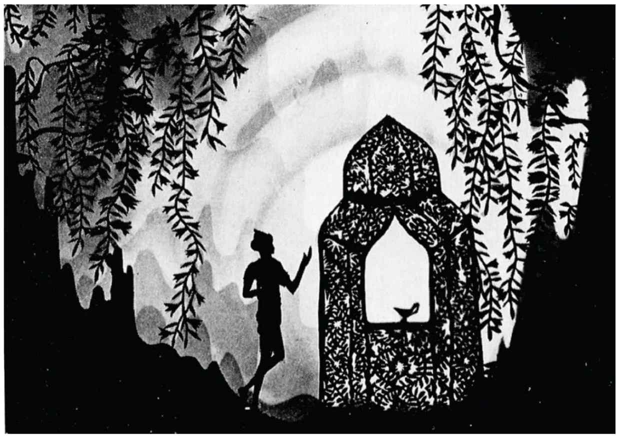
Aladdin did as the magician said and lifted the stone with ease.

The space beneath revealed a set of steps leading into a vault three or four feet deep.

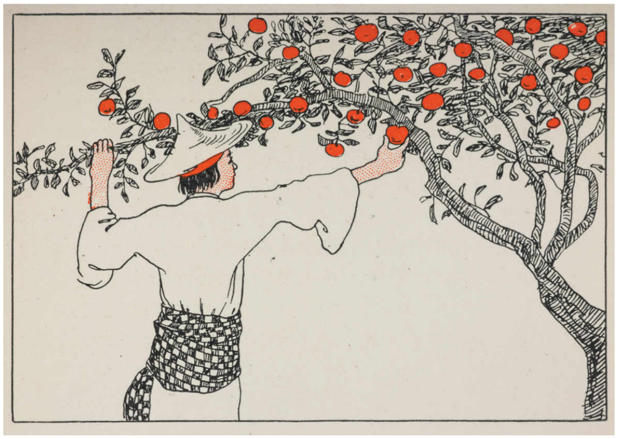
"Go down," said the magician. "At the foot of those steps is an open door leading into three large rooms. There you will find many bronze vessels full of gold and silver, but you must go through the rooms without touching anything.[29] Not even your cloak must brush the walls; keep it wrapped close around you. Otherwise, you would die in an instant. The third room will lead you into a garden[30] of fine trees heavy with fruit. Walk on until you see a flight of fifty steps. At the top is an alcove, and in the alcove, a lamp. Take the lamp,[31] throw out the oil it contains, and bring it to me. Do not worry about staining your cloak: the fuel is not really oil, and the lamp will be dry as soon as you have poured it out. As for the fruits in the garden, you may pick as many as you wish. That is not forbidden."

He slipped a ring off his finger[32] and gave it to Aladdin, saying it would protect him from harm. "Go now," he said, "and be brave. We shall both be rich for the rest of our lives."

Aladdin went into the vault and passed through the rooms with great caution, afraid of death. He crossed the garden like the wind, flew up the stairs, took the burning lamp from its niche, threw out the wick with the oil, and, finding it as dry as the magician had said, put it in his cloak. Back down the steps he went, pausing only to consider the trees, which were bright with extraordinary fruit. There were white fruits, others clear and smooth as crystal, and red fruits, some darker than others, and also green, blue, violet, and yellowish fruits, and other colors too. Looking closer, Aladdin saw that the white ones were pearls; the clear and smooth ones, diamonds; the red were rubies, some darker than others; the green, emeralds; the blue, turquoise; the violet, amethysts; the yellowish ones were sapphires, and so it was with the others, all of them jewels.[33] Their size was unimaginable and their beauty beyond description. Aladdin, who had no idea of their value, was not struck by the sight of these fruits, and was not drawn to them as he might have been to figs or grapes, or any of the other fine fruits that grow in China. Nor was he old enough to know their worth: He thought them nothing more than colored glass. And yet he was compelled, by their beauty and size, and by the variety of their colors, to pick them from the trees. He filled both his pockets with these fruits,[34] as well as the two new pouches the magician had bought with his clothes, and he even wrapped some in the fabric of his belt, which was a long bolt of silk, to keep them from falling.



Aladdin finds the magic lamp in The Adventures of Prince Achmed, *directed by Lotte Reiniger (1926). In Reiniger's film, Aladdin only agrees to get the lamp for the magician in the hope of winning the hand of Dinarzade, the sultan's daughter.*



Aladdin filled his pockets with the beautiful fruit. Illustration by Gilbert James from Les mille et une nuits. Contes choisis pour la jeunesse, *by Kathleen Fitzgerald (London, 1910). James was better known for illustrating an edition of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of* The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

Unaware of the riches he carried, Aladdin hurried back through the rooms with the same caution as before and arrived at the mouth of the vault, where the magician stood ready to meet him.

"Please," said Aladdin, "give me your hand and help me up."

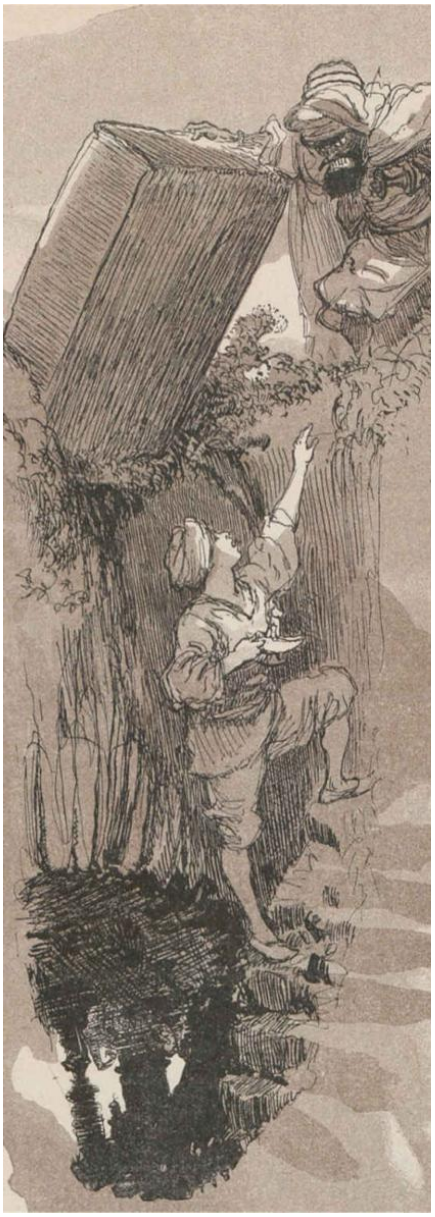
"First give me the lamp,"[35] said the magician. "It might weigh you down."

"Forgive me," replied Aladdin, "it is no weight at all. I will hand it to you as soon as I am out."

The magician insisted on having the lamp first, but Aladdin, who had buried it beneath the piles of fruit he carried, refused. The magician went into a dreadful rage, and, throwing some of his oil on the fire, he spoke a few magic words, and the stone rolled back over the vault, and the earth closed over the stone.[36]

* * *

Now, this magician was not, as he had claimed, the brother of Mustafa the tailor. It follows that he was no uncle of Aladdin's either. He was, in fact, from North Africa, where he had been born, and since the Maghreb is a place more given to magic than any other, he had applied himself to it since childhood. After forty years of spells and study, of divination by sand and by smoke,[37] he had discovered the existence of a magic lamp, which would make him more powerful than any ruler in the universe if he could only become its owner. His last geomantic reading had revealed to him that the lamp was buried underground in the middle of China. Certain of this revelation, he had left the edge of Africa, and after an arduous journey had arrived in the town that lay closest to the treasure.



The magician insisted on having the lamp first. Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

And yet, though he had discovered the lamp’s location, it was not permitted to him to remove it, nor to enter the underground chamber himself. Another had to go in his place, find the lamp, and bring it back to him. For this purpose, he had picked out Aladdin, who seemed to him a boy of no consequence,[38] and he determined, once he had the lamp in his hands, to perform the sorcery I have described and sacrifice the poor fool to his greed, so that there would be no witnesses. By striking him on the face and imposing his will, he sought only to encourage in Aladdin a habit of fear and submission, so that when the magician came to ask for the lamp, Aladdin would hand it over at once. But the opposite ensued. In the end, he betrayed Aladdin sooner than he had intended, fearing that if they argued any longer, someone might overhear them and make known what he had tried to conceal.

When the magician saw his great hopes dashed, he had no choice but to return to his homeland, which he did the very same day. He took a circuitous path to avoid the city he had left with Aladdin, fearing that he would be seen returning without the boy.

That should have been the last anyone heard of Aladdin. But the man who believed he had erased him from the earth had also supplied him with a means of escape. Indeed, the ring was to be Aladdin’s salvation,[39] and it is a wonder that its loss, along with that of the lamp, did not drive the magician to despair. Yet magicians are so accustomed to setbacks and disappointments that they never give up on their lifelong diet of dreams, smoke, and visions.

* * *

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“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

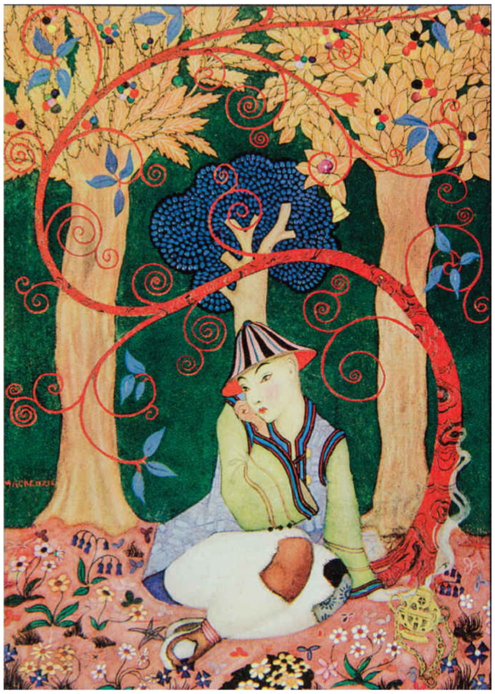
The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE SLAVE OF THE RING

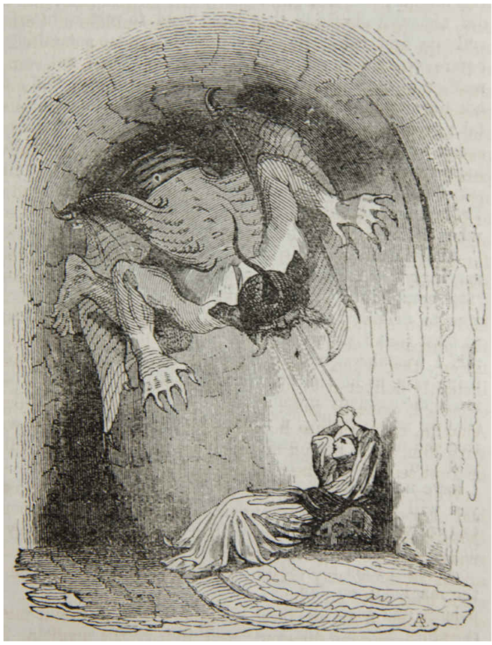
WHEN ALADDIN found himself buried alive, he called out to his uncle a thousand times, promising to give him the lamp, but he could no longer be heard, and there he remained in darkness. At last, after giving some release to his tears, he went down to the bottom of the vault to seek light from the garden he had just crossed, but the door leading to it, which had opened by magic, had now been conjured shut. He groped ahead of him, right and left, but the door was gone, and his tears returned as he sat on the step, and he lost hope of ever seeing the light again. Soon, he thought, he would slip from this darkness into the shadows of death.



Aladdin trapped in the underground chamber. Illustrator Thomas Mackenzie's art nouveau style offers a rich embellishment of this otherwise frightening moment. From Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

Aladdin spent two days in this state,[40] without eating or drinking. On the third day, as he considered his inevitable death, he submitted to God, and, joining his hands in prayer, he said: "There is no might and no power except with God!"

As he held his hands together, he inadvertently rubbed the ring,[41] which the magician had slipped onto his finger and whose power he still did not know. At that moment, an enormous jinni with fearsome eyes rose up from the earth until it filled the vault, and he said these words to Aladdin: “What is your command? I am here to obey you as your slave, and the slave of all those who wear the ring,[42] I and the other slaves of the ring.”



An enormous jinni with fearsome eyes rose up until it filled the vault. Illustration from Edward Forster’s 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.

Aladdin might have been struck silent by such a vision, but now, concerned only with the danger he was in, he replied without hesitation: “Whoever you are, get me out of this place,[43] if such is your power.” At once the earth parted and he found himself outside, precisely at the spot where the magician had led him. Aladdin, who had spent so long in the darkest gloom, struggled at first to face the light of day. When his eyes adapted to the glare, he was amazed to see no opening in the earth and could not understand how he had been so swiftly ejected from its bowels. Only by the traces of burnt brush-wood could he mark the spot where the vault had been.

Turning toward the city, he caught sight of it among its outlying gardens, found the path they had walked, and followed it back, thanking God all the while for returning him to the world he thought he had left for good. He reached the city and staggered home,[44] but the joy of seeing his mother again conspired with the effects of his fast, and he fainted. His mother, who had already wept over his death, did all she could to revive him. When at last he came around, he said he had been hungry for three days, and his mother brought him what she had, warning him not to eat too fast in case he harmed himself.

Aladdin followed his mother's advice. He ate slowly and drank in proportion, and when he finished, he said: "Mother, I could take you to task for abandoning me so easily to the mercy of a man who wanted to destroy me, and who is so sure of his success that as I speak to you now, he must be convinced that I have either lost my life or will lose it by morning. But you believed he was my uncle, and I had no reason to doubt it. What else were we to think[45] of a man who covered me in gifts and promises? Yet you must know, Mother, that he is nothing but a traitor and a wretch. His favors were only a means to get rid of me without rousing our suspicion. I can assure you that nothing I did gave him the slightest reason to mistreat me. You will be of the same opinion when I tell you all that I have suffered since we parted."

Aladdin began to relate to his mother what had happened since Friday, when the magician had taken him to see the palaces and gardens outside the city, and all that took place on the way, until they reached the point between the mountains where the magician was to carry out his deed; how, with a little oil on the fire and a muttered spell, the earth had parted to reveal a vault, which led down to a fathomless treasure. He made sure to mention the blow he had received from the magician, who, having softened a little, had lured him, with promises and the ring on his finger, into the vault. He was careful to report everything he had seen as he crossed and recrossed the three rooms, the garden, and the alcove where he had found the magic lamp.

He showed her the lamp and the fruits he had gathered in the garden. These fruits were precious stones,[46] which shone like the sun even in the bright room, but Aladdin's mother knew no more about such things than her son. She had grown up in poverty and had never had any jewels, nor seen them worn by friends, so it is no wonder that she saw little use in them, besides the pleasure they gave the eye with their many colors.

Aladdin completed his story by relating how, when he returned to the mouth of the vault, ready to step out of it, as he refused to give his uncle the lamp he wanted, the vault had closed over in an instant by the power of the oil the magician had thrown on the fire, which he had been careful to keep alive, and of the words he had spoken. But Aladdin could not go on without faltering. In tears, he described the misery he suffered from the moment he found himself buried alive until he was returned to the world thanks to his ring. “You know the rest,” he said. “Such were my adventures, and the dangers I faced since you saw me last.”

Aladdin’s mother sat patiently through his astonishing story without interrupting. At those moments, however, where the magician’s treachery was most apparent, she could not help but give voice to her outrage, and as soon as Aladdin had finished, she flung a thousand curses on the impostor, calling him a traitor, a wretch, a barbarian, a murderer, a cheat, a sorcerer, and an enemy of the human race.

“Yes, my son, a sorcerer. They traffic in spells, the devil’s trade.[47] Praise be to God, who did not let the magician’s wickedness get the better of you! You must thank Him well for that grace. You would not be alive today had you not remembered Him and begged for His help.” She said many more things, never straying far from the hatred she bore for the magician, but as she spoke, she noticed that Aladdin, who had not slept in three nights, needed to rest.

She put him to bed and retired herself soon after.

* * *

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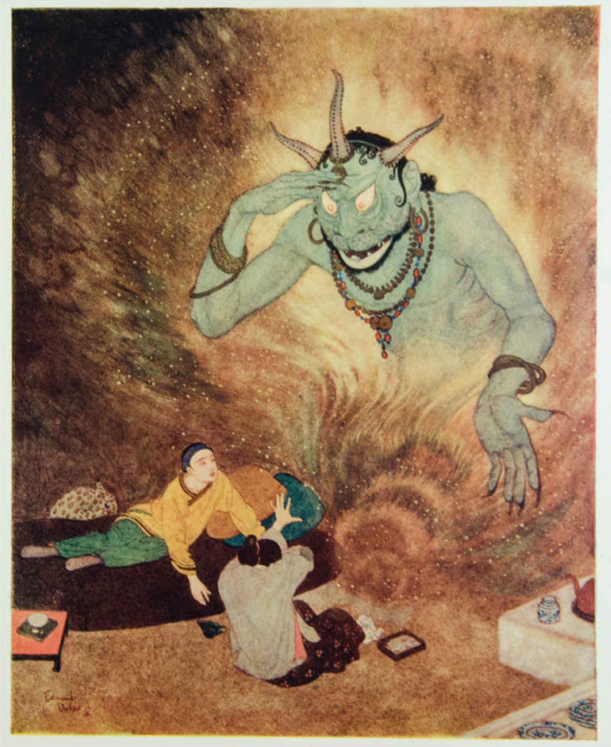
THE SLAVE OF THE LAMP

ALADDIN, who had not rested a moment in his underground prison, spent the night in a deep sleep and did not rise until late. When he woke, he asked to eat.

“Alas,” said his mother, “I have not even a piece of bread to give you. But I have a little cotton thread left over, which I will sell to buy bread and something for our dinner.”

“Save your cotton,” replied Aladdin, “and give me the lamp I brought yesterday. I’ll sell it instead. It will provide us with breakfast and lunch, and perhaps supper, too.”



“A jinni, hideous and gigantic, appeared before her.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

Aladdin’s mother fetched the lamp.[48] As it was very dirty, she took some water and a little sand to clean it, but hardly had she begun to rub it when a jinni, hideous and gigantic,[49] appeared before her and roared:

“What is your command? I am here to obey you as your slave, and the slave of all those who have the lamp, I and the other slaves of the lamp.”

Aladdin’s mother was in no state to reply. She fainted at the first sight of the jinni, but Aladdin did not wait to act. He seized the lamp, and, speaking for his mother, said, “I am hungry. Fetch me something to eat!”[50] The jinni returned in an instant bearing a large silver tray on his head, on which rested twelve silver dishes containing fine meats, six white loaves of bread, and two bottles of exquisite wine. In his hands he held two silver cups. He laid everything on the sofa and disappeared.

When Aladdin’s mother came to her senses, she was amazed at the feast laid before her. “Who have we to thank for this abundance?” she asked. “Could it be that the sultan has heard tell of our poverty[51] and has had mercy on us?” “Mother,” replied Aladdin, “let us eat.” During their meal, Aladdin’s mother never tired of admiring the tray and its dishes, though she could not be sure if they were made of silver or some other material. In truth, since she was unaware of their value, it was only their novelty that held her admiration. Nor did her son know any better.[52]

It was noon when they sat down to their meal, and they did not rise before evening. They decided that since the dishes were hot, they might as well combine breakfast, lunch, and dinner, all in a single sitting. When they had finished their extended meal, Aladdin told his mother about the jinni. “In all my years on earth,” she said, “I have never heard of anyone seeing one. How could this spirit have appeared to me, though he had appeared to you in the vault?”

“Your jinni,” said Aladdin, “is not the same as the one who appeared to me. They are alike in size,[53] but their manner and dress are entirely different: indeed, they belong to different masters. If you remember, the one I saw called himself the slave of the ring I have on my finger, while yours said he was the slave of the lamp. But I do not believe you heard him; you fainted as soon as he began to speak.”

“Do you mean to say,” she said, “that your lamp is to blame for the jinni? Remove it from my sight; I want nothing to do with it. I beg you to sell the ring, too. It is forbidden to deal with the jinn;[54] they are demons. Our prophet said so.”

“After all the lamp has given us,” replied Aladdin, “I would not sell it just yet. My wicked uncle desired this lamp more than all the gold and silver that he knew to be in those rooms. He knew its power well enough[55] to want nothing more from that vault. Since chance has made us aware of its virtues, let us use it, but discreetly, lest we attract the envy of our neighbors.[56] As for the ring, allow me to keep it and have it always on my finger. Without it, you would not have seen me again. Who knows when some other danger might strike, and I will need its deliverance?” His mother could hardly object, and she let him do as he pleased.

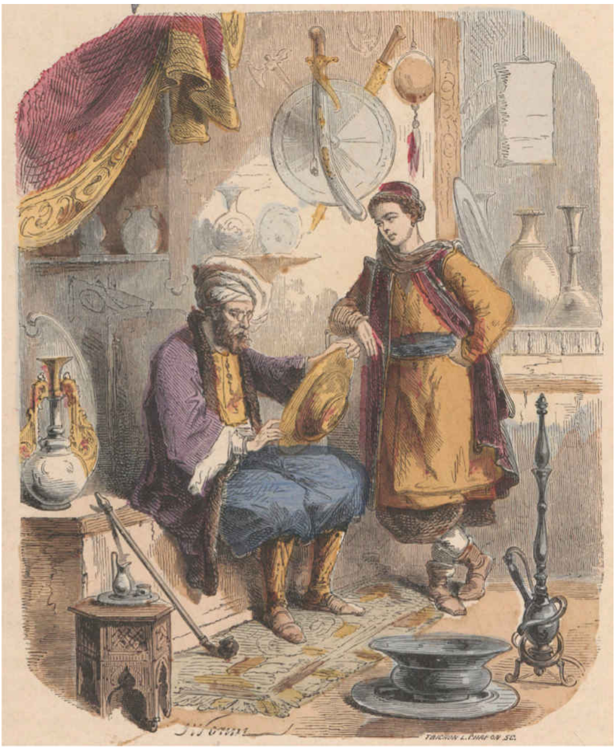
The following night after supper, nothing remained of the good food the jinni had brought. In the morning, before hunger could bite, Aladdin took one of the silver dishes under his cloak and went out to sell it. On the way, he met a Jewish merchant, to whom he showed the dish and asked if he wanted to buy it. The merchant, recognizing it as good silver, asked him how much it was worth. Aladdin, who had no idea, and who had never traded in such goods,[57] simply said he was well aware of the dish’s value and would count on the man’s good faith. Put out by his ingenuity, the merchant took from his purse a gold coin that made up at most one seventy-second of the dish’s value, and presented it to him. Aladdin seized the coin and ran away so quickly that the merchant, not content with the profit he had just made, cursed himself for not having realized that Aladdin knew nothing of the price of his dish, and that he might have given him much less. He thought of running after the young man to try to win back some of his money, but Aladdin was racing, and was already too far to reach.

They lived on the coin for a few days, and when money ran out, Aladdin sold another dish to the merchant, until he had sold all twelve. The merchant, who had paid a gold coin for the first, did not dare offer less for the others, for fear of losing out on the bargain. When nothing remained of the silver dishes, Aladdin went for the tray, which alone weighed ten times more than any single dish. He wanted to take it to another merchant, but the weight of it stopped him, and he was obliged once again to seek out the same merchant, who paid him ten gold coins.

While the ten gold coins lasted, they were spent on the needs of the household. Aladdin, who was used to an idle life, had renounced the company of other boys[58] since his adventure with the magician. Now he spent his days walking or in conversation with people he met. Sometimes he stopped in the merchants’ shops, where he liked to listen in on the discussions, which over time gave him some understanding of the world.

When nothing remained of the ten gold coins, Aladdin turned to the lamp,[59] and the jinni brought them another feast. After the meal, there remained enough for them to live well for two more days.

When they were out of food and money, Aladdin took a silver dish and went to find the merchant to sell it to him. On his way, he passed the shop of an old silversmith who was known for his honesty. The silversmith spotted him and called him in. “My son,” he said, “I have seen you pass by many times, always carrying something as you are now, always going to meet the same merchant, and always returning empty-handed. No doubt you have been selling him your wares. But you are perhaps unaware that this merchant is a cheat,[60] and that none of those who know him will trade with him. If you wished to show me what you are selling, I would faithfully pay you its full price.”


TRICHON L.CHAPON SC.

The silversmith saw that the plate was made of fine silver. From Les Mille et une nuits racontées à bébé *(1884).*

Aladdin pulled the dish from his cloak. The old man, who saw that it was made of fine silver, asked him if he had sold any other dishes to the merchant, and how much the merchant had paid for them. Aladdin confessed that he had sold twelve, and that the merchant had only given him a gold coin apiece. “Ah, the thief!” cried the silversmith. “There is no use regretting it. But when you learn the value of your dish, you will see how the merchant has cheated you.”

The silversmith took the scales and weighed the dish, and told him that it was worth seventy-two gold coins, which he counted out for him at once. “This,” he said, “is the true price of your dish. If you do not believe me, you may ask any one of our silversmiths, and if he tells you it is worth more, I will double my payment.”

Aladdin thanked the silversmith warmly, and from then on went only to him when it came to selling the other dishes, for which he always received a fair price. Though the lamp provided Aladdin and his mother with inexhaustible funds, they lived as frugally as before, and continued in this way for many years.[61]

Aladdin, meanwhile, finished his education by visiting the shops of the finest merchants and joining in their conversations, and gradually took on all the manners of fashionable society. From the company of jewelers, he learned that the fruits he had picked in the orchard, which he had believed to be colored glass, were in fact immensely precious stones. By observing the sale and purchase of such stones in the shops, he learned something of their worth, and, as he saw none that compared to his own, neither in beauty nor in size, he understood that he was in possession of an incalculable fortune. He had the prudence to tell no one about it, not even his mother, and there is no doubt that his silence was to thank for the great riches[62] he was to acquire.

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

"If I live another night," she said, "I shall tell you stranger."

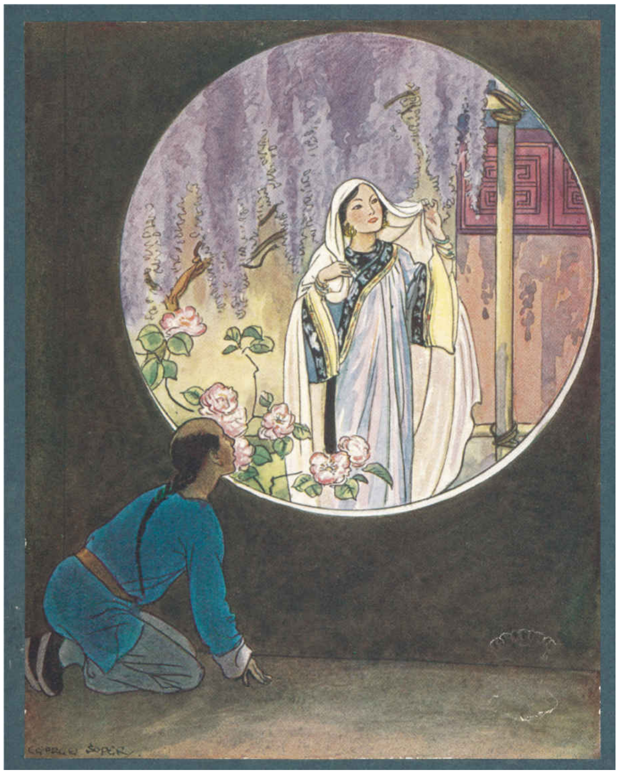
The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, "If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night."

And Shahrazad agreed.

THE SULTAN'S DAUGHTER

One day, as he strolled through the city, Aladdin heard an order from the sultan proclaiming that all shops and houses were to be locked,[63] and that everyone was to stay indoors until Princess Badr al-Budur, or Moon of Moons, the sultan's daughter, had gone to the baths and returned. Aladdin was seized by a desire to see her face, but he could not peek through the screen of one of the houses near the baths, as he knew the princess would be veiled. Instead, he hid himself behind the bathhouse door. Through a slit in the door,[64] he saw her arrive, surrounded by a crowd of women and eunuchs. When she was three or four paces from the bathhouse door, she removed her veil.



Aladdin sees the face of the princess. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

Until that moment, Aladdin had never seen a woman uncovered except his mother, who was aged now, and whose ordinary features had never led Aladdin to suspect that other women might look any different. He might have heard others talk about beautiful women, but whatever words one might use to describe it, none have the effect of beauty itself.

When Aladdin saw Princess Badr al-Budur, he quickly shed his notion that all women must look more or less like his mother. The princess was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She had brown hair, large, bright eyes, a soft and modest gaze, a flawless nose, a small mouth, lovely crimson lips, and all her features were in symphony. Aladdin reeled, shocked by such a combination of marvels.[65] She was tall, too, and carried herself magnificently, which drew the respect of all who saw her.

The princess passed into the bathhouse, and Aladdin stood there for a while in a kind of rapture, retracing and impressing on his memory the figure that had charmed his heart. At last, he recovered his senses, and, considering that it would be vain to wait for the princess's exit from the baths, since she would have her back to him and her face covered, he gave up the prospect and went home.

Aladdin could not hide his agitation from his mother. She asked if he was unwell, but Aladdin said nothing and fell sprawled on the sofa, where he remained, busy only with retracing the lovely image of the princess in his mind. His mother, who was busy with supper, pressed him no further. When the meal was ready, she served it beside him on the sofa and sat down at the table, but, seeing that her son paid no attention to it, she told him to eat, and it was only with the greatest strain that he sat up. He ate much less than usual,[66] his gaze lowered, and withdrew so deeply into himself that his mother could not draw a single word from him. After supper, she renewed her questions, but Aladdin preferred to go to bed rather than give his mother any satisfaction on the subject.

Setting aside how Aladdin, overpowered by the beauty of the princess, spent the night, let us simply remark that the following day, as he sat on the sofa facing his mother, who was spinning cotton as usual, he said: “Mother, I will break the silence I have kept since my return from the city yesterday, which I know has wounded you. I was not ill, as you seemed to believe, nor am I now. Yet I could not tell you what I feel. It is worse than a sickness. Its nature is obscure to me, but perhaps you will understand it by what I am about to tell you.

"You may not have heard," he went on, "that yesterday it was announced that Princess Badr al-Budur, the sultan's daughter, would go to the baths after dinner. I learned the news on my walk around the city. An order was proclaimed to close all the shops and stay indoors, in order to show the princess the respect she was due and let her pass freely through the streets. As I was not far from the baths, the curiosity of seeing her uncovered led me to go and stand behind the bath-house door, fancying that she might remove her veil as she was about to enter. If you remember the door's position, you can imagine that my scheme would have given me a clear view of her. She did, in fact, remove her veil as she went in, and I had the pleasure of seeing the charming princess. That, Mother, is the reason for the state you saw me in yesterday, and the source of my silence. I love the princess with a force I can hardly express.[67] As my passion burns more brightly with every passing moment, it seems my only satisfaction would be to make her mine. That is why I have resolved to ask the sultan for her hand."

Aladdin's mother had listened carefully enough to her son's story, but at these last words, she could not help but burst out laughing. Aladdin wanted to go on, but she cut him short: "My son, what are you thinking? You must have lost your mind to be saying these things."

"I can assure you I have not," replied Aladdin. "In fact, I have never thought so clearly. I have foreseen your accusations of madness and extravagance, but none of that can deter me. My mind is made up to ask the sultan for his daughter's hand in marriage."

"I must tell you," said his mother very seriously, "that you are not in your right mind. Even if you wanted to act on this decision, I cannot imagine whom you could possibly send to ask the sultan."

"You, of course," said Aladdin without hesitation.

"Me!" cried the mother. "To the sultan! And who are you, that you presume to covet your sultan's daughter? Have you forgotten that you are the son of one of the lesser tailors of this city,[68] and of a mother whose ancestors were scarcely more distinguished? Are you aware that sultans are loath to give away their daughters even to the sons of other sultans?”

“I told you I have foreseen these objections,” said Aladdin, “and any more you might raise. Your disapproval cannot sway me. Do not refuse me this favor, unless you would prefer to see me die than to give me life again.”

Alarmed to see how stubbornly he clung to an idea so lacking in good sense, his mother tried again.

“I am your mother,” she said, “and there is nothing within the bounds of reason that I would not do out of love for you. If we were talking of marrying you to the daughter of one of our neighbors, whose condition was similar to ours, I would devote myself, I would do everything in my power to help you, although you would first have to secure some means of an income or learn a craft. But here you are, heedless of your origins, daring to look above your station, to set your sights on no less a person than the daughter of your sovereign, who has only to say a word to crush you. But your fate is yours alone to decide.

“As for what concerns me,” she said, “… supposing I had the brazenness to appear before His Majesty with such an extravagant request, to whom would I even introduce myself? Do you suppose that the first person I spoke to would not accuse me of lunacy and chase me out? Supposing even that I encountered no such difficulty in gaining access to the sultan, I know that he is quick to welcome his aggrieved subjects, and to grant them the justice they seek.[69] I also know that, to those who come to him seeking mercy and who show themselves to be worthy of it, he is merciful.

“But are you one of those,” she asked, “and do you believe you are worthy[70] of the favor you wish to request? What have you done for your sovereign or for your country? How have you distinguished yourself? If you have done nothing to deserve such a favor, if you are not even worthy of it, on what basis could I ask for it? How could I even open my mouth to put the thought to the sultan? His majestic presence and the brilliance of his court would seal my lips at once, I who trembled before your father whenever I had a favor to ask him.

“There is another reason, my son, which has not occurred to you, which is that you cannot appear before your sultan empty-handed. A gift ensures that if the favor is refused, the sultan will at least give you his ear. But what gift can you possibly bring? And even if you were to find something worthy of a moment of your monarch’s attention, what proportion would there be between your gift and your request? Think about it, and consider that what you desire is impossible.”

Aladdin listened calmly to everything his mother came up with to deter him from his course, and, having considered each point of her rebuke, he said: “I admit, Mother, that it is bold of me to dare to presume as I do. You say it is not customary to appear before the sultan empty-handed, and that I have nothing that might be worthy of him. I must confess you are right about the gift; I had not considered it. But when you say I have nothing to offer him, do you not think that what I brought home after the night of my near-death would make a delightful present for the sultan? The things with which I filled my pouches and my belt are not, as we had supposed, only colored glass; they are extremely precious stones, fit only for great monarchs. I learned of their value in the jewelers’ shops, but none of those I saw were comparable to ours, and yet they sell for immense prices. Whatever their value, I am convinced that the sultan cannot but receive them with pleasure. Go and fetch your porcelain bowl, and let us see the effect of all the colors together.”

Aladdin’s mother brought the bowl, and her son removed the gems from the pouches and laid them out against the porcelain. Mother and son were dazzled by their shine,[71] for they had never seen them other than by the light of the lamp. It is true that Aladdin had seen them on their trees, gleaming like fruit, but, being a child, he had believed the stones to be no more than playthings, and had taken them with nothing else in mind.

“Mother,” said Aladdin, “you can no longer evade going to the sultan on the grounds that you have nothing to bring him. This gift will, I believe, earn you a most favorable welcome.” So it was that his mother, both out of tenderness for him and fear that he might give in to some extreme act, overcame her resistance and accepted.

As it was late and the time to go to the palace was past, the matter was put off until morning. Mother and son talked of nothing else for the rest of the day, and Aladdin took care to impress on his mother anything that might strengthen her resolve. But despite all his reasons, she was not persuaded that such a venture could ever succeed; it must be admitted that she had every reason to doubt. “Supposing,” she said, “the sultan receives me as favorably as we hope, and listens calmly to my proposal, but after that warm welcome, asks me about your fortune and your estate—what do you expect me to tell him?”

“Mother,” replied Aladdin, “let us not worry ourselves ahead of time over what may not come to pass. Let us first see what sort of welcome you receive from the sultan, and what sort of answer he gives. If he does happen to ask such questions, I will think of a suitable answer. I trust that the lamp,[72] which has been our lifeline all these years, will not fail me when I most need it.”

* * *

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“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

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BEFORE THE SULTAN

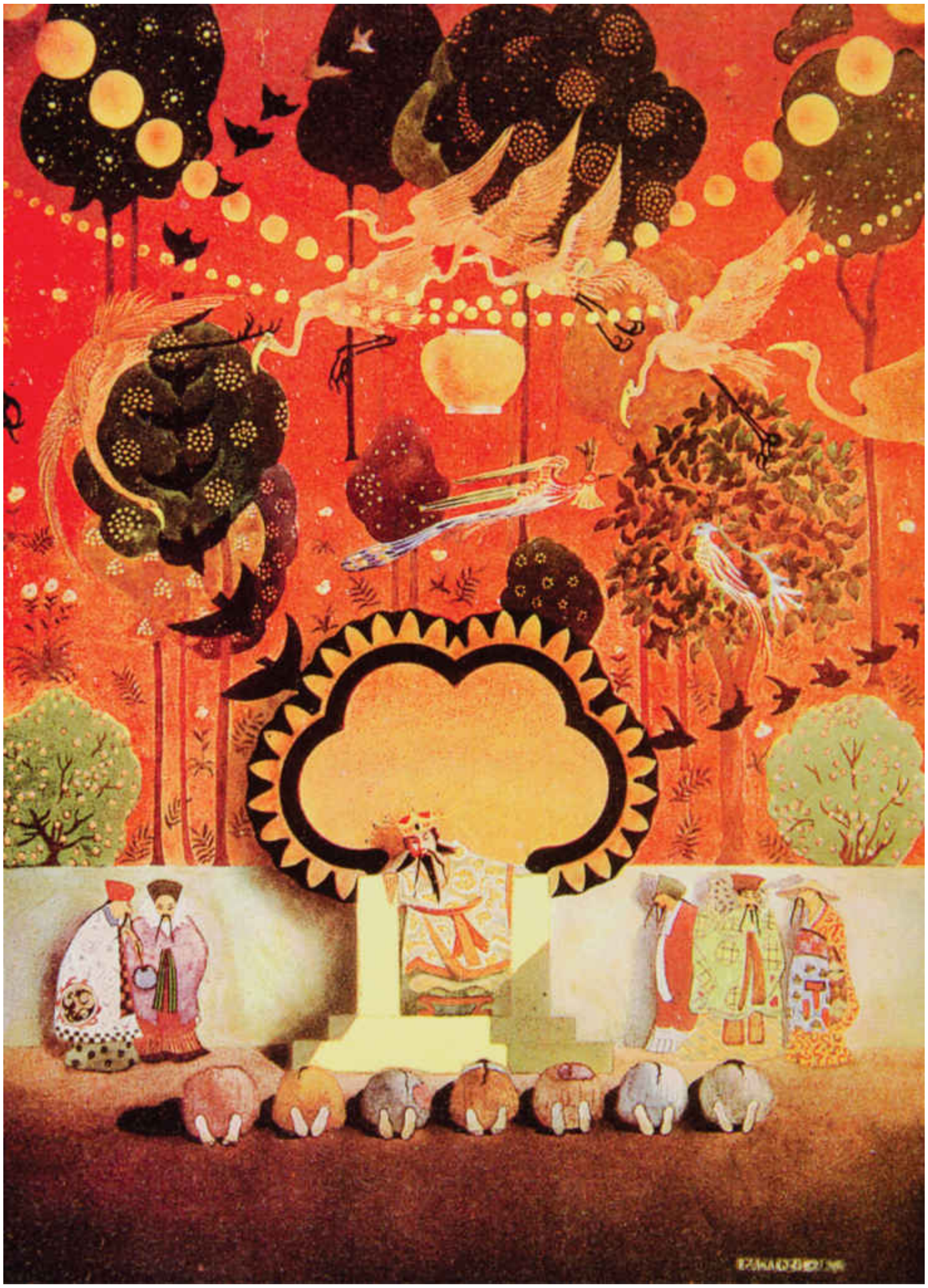
ALADDIN AND HIS MOTHER retired for the night, but the violent passion and dreams of endless fortune that filled the son’s mind stopped him from sleeping as soundly as he would have liked. He rose before first light, went to wake his mother, and pressed her to dress as fast as she could in order to be at the palace gate when it opened.

Aladdin’s mother took the porcelain bowl with its gift of gemstones, wrapped it in a napkin, and carried it to the palace. The grand vizier and the lords of council had just entered when she arrived at the gate. She joined the large crowd of people seeking an audience and walked with them to the divan, or council chamber. It was a splendid room, vast and deep, with a magnificent entrance. She placed herself in front of the sultan. Petitioners were called one after the other,[73] and their matters were discussed, debated, and concluded, until the session was over. Then the sultan rose, dismissed his council, and returned to his apartments, followed by the grand vizier and the other ministers. All those who had gathered to have their matters heard left the room—some satisfied with the outcome of their case, others displeased with the judgment made against them, others still hopeful of being heard in another session.

Aladdin's mother judged that the sultan would not appear again that day and went home. Her son, seeing her return with the gift, hardly dared ask after her journey. His mother, who had never set foot in the sultan's palace and had not the first idea of what took place there, spoke with great innocence.[74]

"I saw the sultan," she said, "and I am sure he saw me too. I was standing right in front of him, and nobody stood between us. But he was preoccupied with all the speakers, and it moved me to see the trouble he took to listen to them. It all lasted so long that I think he got bored, for he stood up unexpectedly and withdrew at once, without having heard the many other people who were waiting to speak. Still, it gave me great pleasure to see him, though I too began to lose patience at having to stand for so long. I will go back tomorrow. Perhaps the sultan will not be so busy."

Enamored as he was, Aladdin could not but accept this excuse and wait. He was at least satisfied that his mother had made the most difficult leap, which was to hold the sultan's gaze, and he hoped that the sight of others speaking in his presence had emboldened her to act when a favorable moment came.



Petitioners appear before the sultan. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

The next morning, she returned to the palace, but she found the divan closed and learned that the council only sat every other day. She brought this news to her son, who was forced to renew his patience. She went back six times on the appointed days, and she might have returned a hundred times just as uselessly if the sultan, who saw her standing before him at every session, had not noticed her.

One day, the sultan said to his grand vizier, “Some time ago I began to notice a certain woman, who attends every session of the council, always carrying a bundle wrapped in cloth. She stands for the full length of the hearing and is always careful to place herself in front of me. Do you know what she wants?”

The grand vizier, who knew no more than the sultan, felt he ought to say something, and replied, “Your Majesty is aware that women often complain about nothing.[75] This woman has no doubt come to carp about the bad flour she was sold, or some other trivial matter.”

The sultan was not satisfied with this answer.

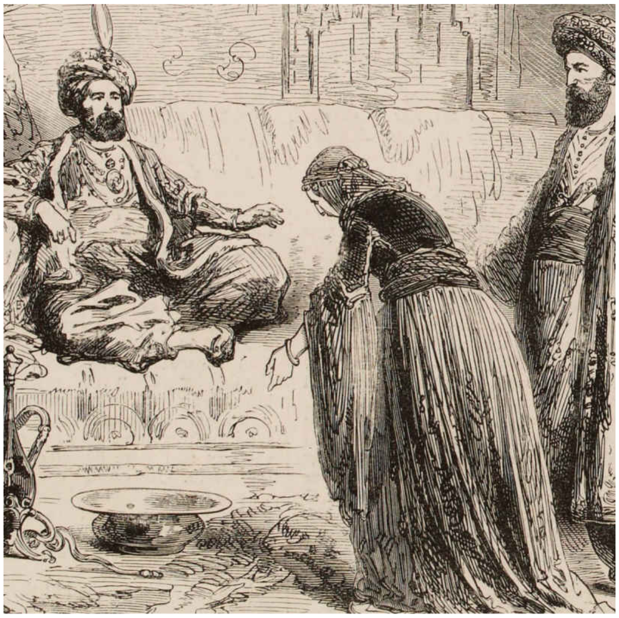
“Call her next time,” he said, “and let us hear her.”

The vizier’s only reply was to kiss the sultan’s hand and raise it above his head, to indicate that he was prepared to lose his head if he failed to obey.

At the next session, Aladdin’s mother was called forward. She walked behind the usher up to the sultan’s throne, and, following the example of the others, she knelt and pressed her forehead to the carpet until the sultan told her to rise. “Good woman,” he said, “I have seen you often in this divan, standing before me from beginning to end. What brings you here?”

“King of kings,” she said, “before I reveal the reason for my presence before your throne, I beg your pardon for the boldness of the question I have come to ask. It is so unusual that I tremble with shame at the thought of submitting it to my sultan.” The sultan sent away all but the grand vizier and told her she could speak without fear.

Once Aladdin’s mother had taken all the precautions that her delicate mission required, she told the sultan how Aladdin had seen Princess Badr al-Budur, how that encounter had roused him to an irresistible passion, how he had confessed his love for her, and how she had done all she could to talk him out of an infatuation “no less insolent to Your Majesty,” she said, “than to the princess. But he persisted, and even threatened to commit some desperate act if I did not come and ask Your Majesty for the princess’s hand. After a terrible struggle, I accepted. Now I beg you to forgive not only myself but my son Aladdin.”



Aladdin's mother appeals to the sultan. Detail from Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp; Sindbad, the Sailor, or the Old Man of the Sea; Ali Baba, or the Forty Thieves *(London, 1879). This edition of stories from the* Nights *was revised by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a popular Victorian novelist who produced more than eighty novels.*

The sultan listened to her with great gentleness, without the slightest sign of outrage or even of derision, and he asked what she had in her bundle of cloth. She unwrapped the gift and laid the jewels at the foot of the throne.

One could not describe the sultan's surprise when he saw so many precious stones assembled in that bowl, for they were larger, brighter, more precious, and more perfect than any he had seen before. For a while, he was so amazed he could not move. When he recovered his composure, he took the gift from Aladdin's mother's hands and gave a cry of joy: "How beautiful these are! How rich!" After picking up and admiring almost every stone in turn, and noting what distinguished each of them, he turned to his grand vizier and said, "Look at these, and tell me if there is anything more precious on this earth. Is this gift not worthy of my daughter,[76] and should I not give her to whoever values her at such a price?"

These words threw the grand vizier into a strange turmoil. Some time before, the sultan had hinted that he wished to marry his daughter to one of the vizier’s sons. Now he feared that the beauty of this gift would change his mind.

“No one can deny,” he said, “that this present is worthy of the princess. But I implore Your Majesty to grant me three months before making a decision. I hope that by then my son will be able to offer you a gift even more precious than Aladdin’s.”

The sultan, convinced that his grand vizier could never find his son a present to match this one, still granted him that grace, and he told Aladdin’s mother that he consented to the marriage, and that she should return after three months.

Aladdin’s mother, who had thought an audience with the sultan impossible, returned home overjoyed. When Aladdin saw his mother enter, both earlier than usual and with smiling eyes, he asked her if he could live in hope.

“My son,” she said, “put an end to your agony. Far from thinking of death, you have every reason to rejoice.” She went on to relate how she had been heard before anyone else, the precautions she had taken before presenting her offer to the sultan, and the favorable response he had given. She added that, as far as she could judge, the gift had impressed him and moved him to approval. “I did not expect it,” she said, “as the grand vizier had whispered something into his ear just before he answered me, and I feared that the vizier would turn him away from his good intentions.” Aladdin, elated, resolved himself to patience, and he counted the hours and days that kept him from his beloved.

Two months had passed[77] when his mother, going into the city one evening to buy oil, found everyone rejoicing and all the shops illuminated. The streets were thick with palace officials in ceremonial dress, mounted on richly caparisoned horses and surrounded by a multitude of footmen who came and went. She asked her oil merchant what was going on. “Where have you been, my good lady?” he said. “Do you not know that the son of the grand vizier is to marry the princess tonight? She will soon be leaving the baths, and the officials that you see all around will escort her back to the palace for the ceremony.”

Aladdin’s mother ran home. Her son was unprepared for the terrible news she brought.

“All is lost!” she cried. “You hoped for the sultan’s beautiful daughter, but it was not to be.”

“How could the sultan have broken his promise?” said Aladdin. “How do you know?”

“Tonight,” replied his mother, “the grand vizier’s son will marry Princess Badr al-Budur at the palace.”

She told him the story, in such detail that it left no room for doubt.

Any other man would have given up hope, but a secret jealousy kept Aladdin from despair. Without a single word against the sultan, the vizier, or his son, he simply said, “Mother, the grand vizier’s son will perhaps not be as happy as he expects this evening.” He went to his room, took the magic lamp he kept there to hide it from his mother, and rubbed it in the same spot his mother had rubbed it before. At once, the jinni appeared before him.

“What is your command?”

“The sultan has broken his promise to me and is marrying the princess to another. I command you to bring me the bride and groom tonight.”[78]

“As you wish, master,” said the jinni.

Aladdin went back to his mother and ate as calmly as usual. After supper, he spoke to her a little about the princess’s marriage, as though the matter no longer concerned him. He returned to his room, and, while his mother went to bed, he stayed up waiting for the jinni to do his work.

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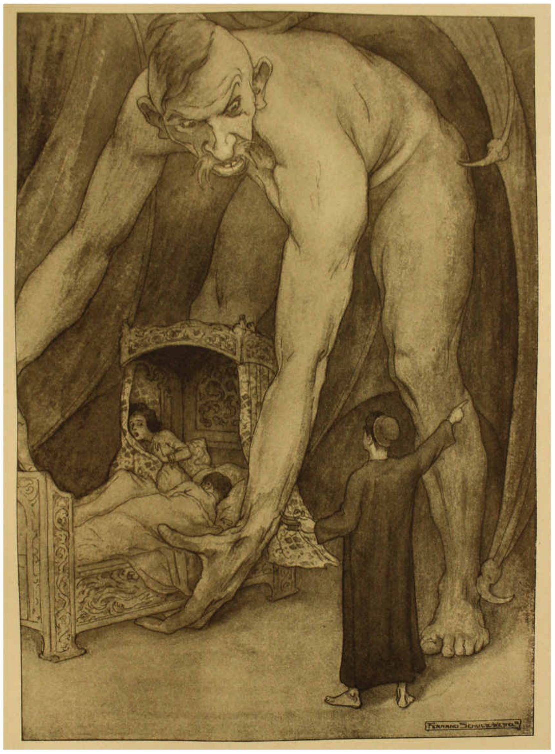
A WEDDING INTERRUPTED

Meanwhile, at the palace, the celebrations went on well into the night. At last, the grand vizier’s son was led into his bride’s chamber by the chief eunuch, and he went to bed first. Before long the sultana, surrounded by her handmaidens, brought in her daughter. The daughter made a great show of resisting, as is the custom with new brides. The sultana helped her undress, and, after kissing her daughter goodnight, she withdrew with all her women. The last one to leave closed the door.

No sooner was the door shut than the jinni, before the couple had even had time to embrace, transported them,[79] still in their bed, in an instant to Aladdin’s bedroom. “Take this man,” said Aladdin to the jinni, “lock him in the outhouse,[80] and come back tomorrow at daybreak.” The jinni removed the grand vizier’s son from the bed in his nightshirt and left him out in the cold, after casting a spell over him to keep him still.



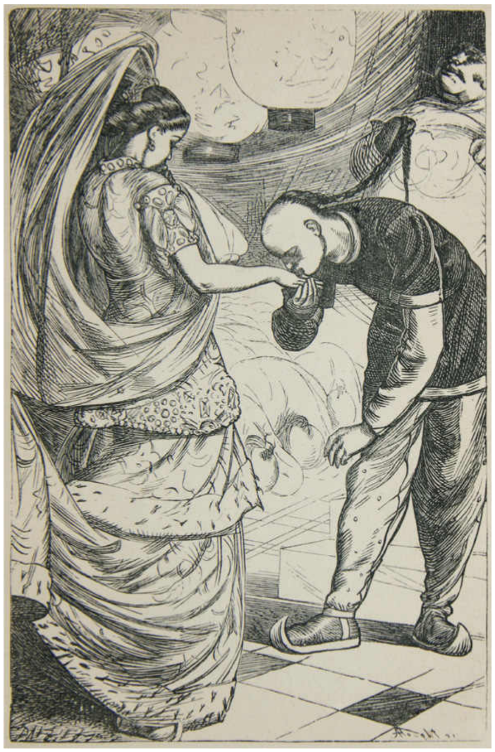
Aladdin commands the jinni to transport the couple. Illustration by Fernand Schultz-Wettel from Tusen och en natt *(1921).*

For all his passion, Aladdin did not say much when he found himself alone with the princess. “Have no fear,” he said. “You are safe here. If I have been forced to these extreme measures, it was not to offend you, but to prevent an unworthy rival from possessing you, since your father had promised you to me."[81] The princess, who knew nothing of the matter, barely took in these words and was in no state to reply. The shock of her strange adventure had left her speechless. Aladdin did not stop there. He undressed and took the place of the grand vizier's son in bed, his back turned to the princess, having placed a sword between them[82] to indicate that he deserved its punishment should he dare to offend her honor.

Delighted to have deprived his rival of the happiness he had flattered himself would be his, Aladdin slept soundly, while the princess passed the most miserable night of her life. Should one remember the state in which the jinni had left the grand vizier's son, one might suppose that his was hardly more restful.

In the morning, Aladdin did not need to rub the lamp to call the jinni. At the appointed hour, it appeared, fetched the bridegroom, laid him down by the princess, and returned the bed to the palace. It should be noted that neither the princess nor the grand vizier's son saw the jinni; a glimpse of its hideous form might have killed them. Nor did they hear any of what was said between it and Aladdin. All they perceived was the jolt[83] of hurtling from one place to the next, and this was quite enough to terrify them.

The jinni had just returned the nuptial bed to its place when the sultan entered to wish his daughter good morning. The grand vizier's son, until now still frozen after his long night, jumped up and ran to his dressing room as he heard the door open.



Aladdin addresses Princess Budur. Illustration by Arthur Boyd Houghton from The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments *by George Fyler Townsend (1860).*

The sultan approached the princess’s bed, kissed her between the eyes according to custom, and asked after her night. As he stood back and looked at her more closely, he was astonished to see only a deep melancholy in her eyes, and no other sign that might have set his mind at ease. His daughter would not say a word. As he imagined that she did so out of shyness, he withdrew. Yet he could not help but think there was something strange in her silence, and he made straight for the sultana’s apartments. “Your Majesty must not be alarmed,” she told him. “All brides are shy the day after their wedding. Give her two or three days, then she will receive her father properly. I will go to her now, and would be very much surprised if she gives me the same welcome.”

The sultana dressed and went to her daughter, finding her not only speechless but with a look of such dejection that she was alarmed. “Why is it, child, that you hang so limply in my arms? Is it right to treat your mother and father like this? What is the matter?”

At last, Princess Badr al-Budur broke the silence with a great sigh.

“Ah, dear Mother,” she cried, “forgive me if I have failed to honor you as I must! My mind is haunted by the strange happenings of last night, and my body has not recovered from its shock. I struggle even to recognize myself.”

Then she related in the most vivid terms how, the moment she and her groom had laid their heads on the pillow, the bed had been snatched away and transported at once to a dark and dirty room, where she found herself alone without her husband, and where a young man, after saying a few words that fright stopped her from catching, lay down beside her in her husband’s place, having put a saber between them, and that in the morning her husband had reappeared and the bed returned to its place in an instant.

“All this had only just happened,” she went on, “when my father the sultan entered the room. Such was my stupor and alarm that I could not say a single word. No doubt he is offended by the way I repaid the honor of his visit, but I hope he will forgive me when he learns of my miserable adventure.”

The sultana listened calmly to the princess’s tale and believed none of it. “You did well to hold your tongue around your father,” she said. “Be careful not to mention any of this to others. They would think you mad. Now get up, and shake these dreams from your mind. It would not do for such a fantasy to get in the way of your wedding celebrations. Can you not hear the fanfare already—the trumpets, the cymbals, and the drums? Their music will drive these fancies from your spirit.”

The festivities went on all day in the palace. The sultana stood by her daughter and did all she could to buoy her up, yet it was plain to see that her mind was elsewhere. The grand vizier’s son was no less preoccupied after his awful night, but ambition drove him to dissemble, and no one doubted that he was a happy husband.

Aladdin had no intention of letting the couple rest, and as soon as night had fallen, he turned to the lamp again. “Jinni,” he said, “the vizier’s son and the princess will sleep together tonight. Go, and when they are in bed, bring them to me as you did yesterday.”

The jinni served Aladdin as faithfully as he had the night before, the grand vizier’s son was just as cold and uncomfortable as he had been the first time, and the princess was just as mortified to find herself in bed with

Aladdin, with only a saber between them. At first light, the jinni reappeared and restored them to the palace chamber.

The sultan, anxious to know how she had spent the night, paid his daughter an early visit. The grand vizier's son, even more appalled by this last misadventure than by the first, threw himself into his dressing room as soon as he heard the sultan approach.

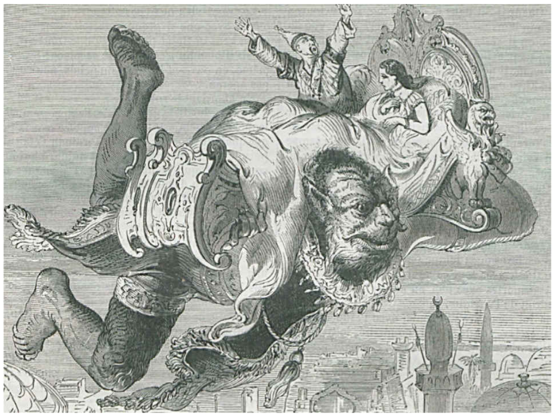
The sultan greeted his daughter, and, after his usual embrace, said: "Well, my child, is your temper as foul today as it was yesterday? Will you tell me how you slept?" But again she refused to say a word. Only after he threatened to cut off her head did she speak.[84]

"My dear father and sultan," she pleaded, on the edge of tears, "I hope that you will change anger for compassion once you have heard my account of last night and the night before."

She told him the true story of those two dreadful nights, in such a poignant manner that love and tenderness lanced through him as she spoke. "If you have the slightest doubt about the truth of my tale, ask the husband you have given me if it was not so."

The sultan sat brooding over the anguish such a strange adventure must have brought the princess. "My daughter," he said, "you are very wrong not to have spoken up yesterday about this bizarre affair, which concerns me as much as it does you. I did not marry you to make you miserable,[85] but rather to give you all the happiness one could have expected from a husband who seemed to suit you well. Now shake these awful visions from your spirit. I will see to it that the nights ahead are not so restless as the ones that have passed."

Back in his quarters, the sultan told the grand vizier to find his son. The grand vizier pressed him to set the story straight.



The jinni again transported the couple in their bed. Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

“I cannot hide the truth from you, Father,” said the son. “All the princess has said is so. But she cannot have told you about the cruel treatment that was reserved for me. Since my wedding day, I have spent two of the most brutal nights it is possible to imagine. I lack the words to describe the particular hell I endured, not to mention the horror of being whisked away by unseen hands[86] no less than four times, without the first idea of how such a thing was possible. You shall form your own judgment of the state I was in, when I tell you that I spent two nights standing naked in my nightshirt in some narrow outhouse, unable to move or change position, though there seemed to be nothing stopping me. Though none of these trials has diminished the love I bear the princess, I would rather die than persist in this union, if the ordeal I have suffered is the price. And so I beg of you, Father, that you obtain from the sultan the annulment of our marriage.”

Despite the grand vizier’s dreams of marrying his son to the princess, he did not think it appropriate, given his son’s resolve, to ask him to draw out his patience another few days. He left him and hurried back to the sultan, to whom he confessed that by his son’s own account, the story was all too true. Before the sultan could talk of breaking off the marriage, which he seemed only too inclined to do, the vizier begged him to allow his son to withdraw from the palace and return home, lest the princess’s love for him should expose her to any further anguish.

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

PRINCE ALADDIN

At once the sultan gave orders to end the celebrations in his palace and throughout the kingdom. Before long, all signs of joy and revelry had ceased. This sudden change fanned speculation in the city: some wondered what mishap had brought on the upheaval, others only noted that the grand vizier and his son were seen leaving the palace with long faces. Aladdin alone knew the secret, and he quietly thrilled at the triumph he owed to the lamp. Strangest of all was that neither the sultan nor the grand vizier, who both had forgotten all about Aladdin and his request, suspected that he might have had a hand in the mysteries that had ended the princess’s marriage.

Still, Aladdin let the rest of the three months go by. He counted each day with care, and when they were spent, he sent his mother to the palace to remind the sultan of his promise. In sending her away for three months, the sultan believed he had seen the last of her, for despite the brilliance of her gift, he judged by the plainness and poverty of her appearance that the marriage she proposed was hardly suitable for the princess. Yet here she was, imploring him to keep his word. The sultan, ill at ease, played for time. Turning to his grand vizier, he confessed his doubts[87] about marrying the princess to a stranger he supposed to be destitute.

The grand vizier was quick to volunteer his thoughts. “Majesty,” he said, “it strikes me that there is one way of avoiding such an ill-suited marriage without giving Aladdin cause for complaint. That is to set the princess at such a high price that his fortune, whatever it may be, could never match it."

The sultan was pleased, and turned to Aladdin's mother. "Good woman," he said, "sultans must keep their word, and I will keep mine, but first your son must send me forty vessels of solid gold,[88] each filled to the brim with jewels, carried by forty black slaves,[89] led by as many white ones, all young, tall, well made, and splendidly dressed. I shall await his answer."

Aladdin's mother bowed again before the sultan and withdrew. On the way home, she laughed to herself about her son's wild ambition. "Where will he find all those gold vessels," she thought, "and all that colored glass to fill them? Will he go back to the underground place to pick them from the trees? And all those slaves, turned out as the sultan described, where will he get them? Where are his dreams now! I do not expect he will be pleased with my report."

By the time she entered the house, she had convinced herself that Aladdin had nothing left to dream of. "My son," she said, "I would abandon all hope of marrying Princess Badr al-Budur. It is true that the sultan received me with kindness, and I believe he was well disposed toward you. But the grand vizier seems to have turned him, as you may judge yourself by what happened. When I reminded His Majesty that the three months had passed, and begged him to remember his promise, I noticed that he only gave me an answer after speaking for some time with his vizier." Aladdin's mother carefully related the sultan's words, and the precise conditions he had imposed on the marriage.

"He is expecting your answer," she told her son with a smile, "but I think he will be waiting a long time."

"Not so long as you think," replied Aladdin, "and the sultan is mistaken if he believes that his demands will put me off. I had expected real obstacles, but what he asks is very little." He retreated to his room and summoned the jinni.

"The sultan will give me his daughter to marry," said Aladdin, "but first he wants forty gold vessels, full to the brim with fruit from the garden where I found your master the lamp. These forty gold vessels must be carried by as many black slaves, preceded by forty white slaves, all young, tall, well made, and richly dressed. Go and bring me such a gift without delay, so I may send it to the sultan before the divan session is out."

The jinni returned at once with the eighty slaves, forty bearing solid gold vessels on their heads, filled with pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds,[90] even larger and more beautiful than those the sultan had seen. Together they filled the small house and its garden. Aladdin opened the door, ushered out the men one after the other, and when his mother had walked out after the last slave, he closed the door behind her and retreated calmly to his room.

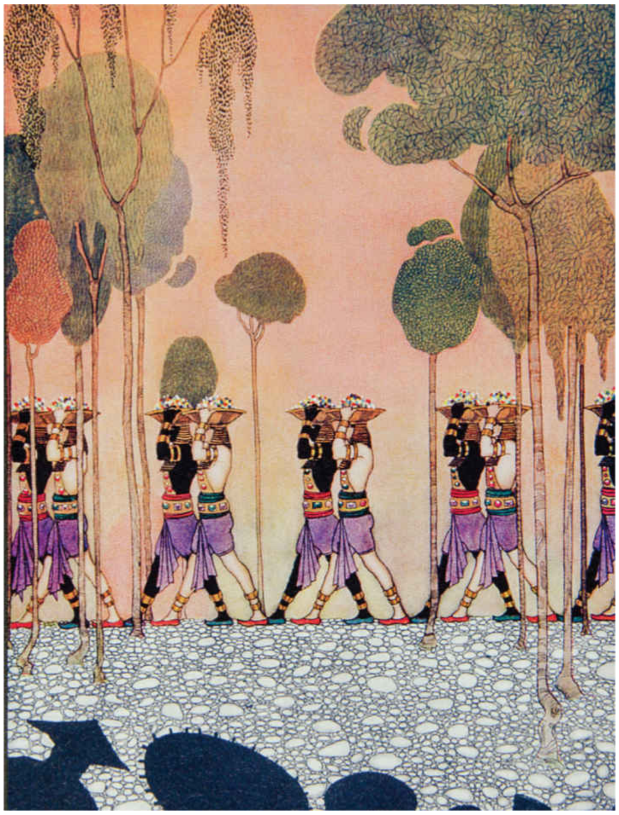


Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

The first slave to leave Aladdin's house had amazed everyone who saw him, and before all eighty men were out, the street was full of people[91] running from all directions to catch sight of the procession. The polished skin, the elegant form and carriage of these men, their equal size, their solemn pace, married with the gleam of heavy jewels that hung about their waists and framed their temples, stirred the crowd to a wild delight, but the streets were so packed with bodies that none could move. Only their eyes followed the parade until they could see no more.

Many streets lay between these splendid men and the palace, and half the city saw them pass. When the first of the eighty slaves reached the door of the first courtyard, the porters, who took him for a king on account of his clothes, stepped forward to kiss his hem. But the slave, under orders from the jinni, stopped them, and said: “We are but slaves. Our master will appear in time.”

The first slave, followed by the others, moved on to the vast second courtyard, where the palace guard stood while the divan was in session. The officers in command of each troop were a spectacular sight, but they paled in the presence of the eighty slaves who formed part of Aladdin’s gift and bore the rest of it on their heads. Nothing else shone so brightly in the sultan’s palace. The brilliance of his court faded before what had just appeared in its midst.

When the sultan heard that these men had arrived, he gave orders to admit them, and they entered the divan in stately fashion, some from the left and others from the right. Once they had formed a great half-moon before the sultan’s throne, the black slaves laid on the carpet the vessels they had carried, then they all knelt and pressed their foreheads to the floor, and the white slaves did likewise. When they rose again, they stood modestly with their arms crossed on their chests, while Aladdin’s mother presented them.

“Majesty,” she said, “my son Aladdin is well aware that the present he has sent is not worthy of the princess, yet he hopes that you will not be displeased with it, considering that he has tried to conform to the conditions you were good enough to impose.”

The sultan barely heard her. A glimpse of the forty gold vessels, brimming with the most vivid and precious jewels,[92] and of the eighty slaves who seemed as many kings, had left him speechless. He turned to his grand vizier, who knew no more than he did as to the source of such a cornucopia. “Well, vizier,” he said, “what do you make of that man, whoever he is, who sends me such a sumptuous gift, and who is unknown to us both? Do you believe him unworthy of marrying my daughter?”

The grand vizier did not dare dissemble, and the sultan banished his doubts. He did not even think to discover whether Aladdin's other qualities might make for a suitable son-in-law. The mere sight of such riches,[93] and the diligence with which Aladdin had met his wild request, apparently without the slightest trouble, persuaded him that Aladdin had every accomplishment one could wish for. "Good woman," he said to Aladdin's mother, "go and tell your son that I await him with open arms."

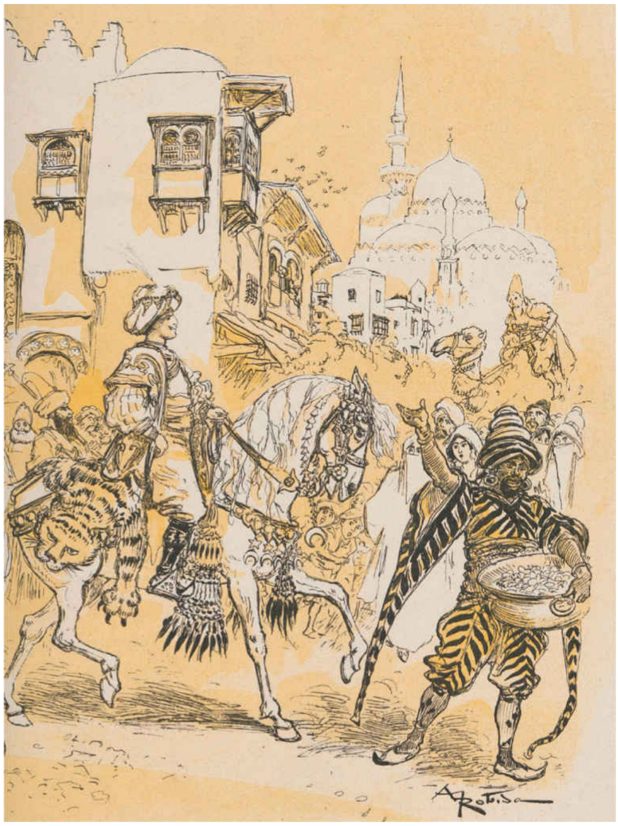
The eighty slaves were not forgotten. They were brought inside the palace, and the sultan, after praising them to the princess, had them placed outside her room, so that she could look at them through her latticework screen and judge that he had exaggerated nothing, but rather had told her much less than what was there.

Aladdin's mother lost no time telling her son the good news. "You have every reason to be happy," she said. "Your wishes have been granted. I won't keep you waiting any longer. The sultan has consented to your marrying the princess, and the court applauded his decision. He looks forward to embracing you and concluding your marriage. Now it is up to you to prepare for that encounter, so that the hopes he has placed in you are not disappointed; but after the marvels I have seen you perform, I have no doubt he will be satisfied. Now make haste, my son. The sultan awaits you impatiently."

Overjoyed, Aladdin retired to his room and called the jinni. "Give me a bath," he said, "and when I am clean, find me an outfit more splendid than any monarch has ever worn."

At once he was taken to a bathhouse made of the finest marble, where unseen hands undressed him in a spotless hall. He was led into the bath, which was just hot enough, to be scrubbed and sluiced with scented waters. After passing through a series of further rooms, each cooler than the last, he emerged a quite different man,[94] his complexion now brighter, his body lighter, refreshed. Back in the hall, he saw that, in the place of his old clothes, lay an exquisite new outfit, which he put on with the jinni's help, admiring each garment in turn. Then he asked the jinni for a horse more gentle and more graceful than any in the sultan's stables, twenty slaves to attend him, six handmaidens to wait on his mother, each bearing an outfit just as sumptuous as any in the sultana’s wardrobe, and ten thousand gold coins in ten purses.[95]

The jinni disappeared and returned immediately with the horse, the twenty slaves, ten of whom carried purses filled with gold, and the six handmaidens, each bearing a different outfit for Aladdin’s mother, wrapped in a silver cloth, and presented it all to Aladdin. Of the ten purses, Aladdin gave four to his mother and left the remaining six in the hands of his slaves, with orders to send the coins flying into the crowd as they passed on their way to the palace. At last, he presented the handmaidens to his mother and said that they were hers, along with the clothes on their heads.



“The streets through which Aladdin passed rang with cheers.” Detail from illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

Then Aladdin mounted his horse and set off for the palace. He had never been on a horse before, yet he moved with such grace that not even the finest rider would have guessed he was so green. The streets through which he passed rang with cheers,[96] rising to a roar when the six slaves sent handfuls of gold coins flying to left and right. Aladdin went unrecognized, not only by those who remembered his days of mischief on these streets, but even by those who had seen him not long before, so altered were his looks, for it was a property of the lamp,[97] as it enriched its owners, to match their appearance by degrees to their higher standing. As word spread that the sultan had given Aladdin the princess to marry, he appeared so deserving of the honor that no one thought to doubt his importance.

Aladdin arrived at the palace, where everything was set out to receive him. When he reached the second gate and tried to dismount, as was the custom among viziers, generals, and governors of the highest rank, he was stopped by the chief usher, under orders from the sultan, who led him instead to the threshold of the divan and helped him from his horse, despite his protests. Taking Aladdin by the arm, he led him past the other ushers, who framed the entrance in two neat lines, and on to the sultan's throne.

When the sultan saw Aladdin, he was just as amazed by his splendid outfit, richer than any he had ever worn himself, as by his radiant skin, his impressive size, and a certain air of grandeur quite unlike the modest state in which his mother had appeared before him. He rose from his throne in time to stop Aladdin from throwing himself at his feet, embraced him, and led him into a dazzling hall where a feast was laid, and where they ate together alone. The sultan, eyes fixed on Aladdin in delight, let their talk drift over many subjects, and found that Aladdin could speak with knowledge and wisdom[98] on all of them.

After the meal, the sultan summoned the highest-ranking judge in the city and had him draw up the marriage contract on the spot. Meanwhile, the sultan and Aladdin kept up their conversation in the presence of the grand vizier and the gentlemen of the court, who admired the soundness of his mind, his easy eloquence, and the subtle observations with which he peppered their exchange.

When the judge had finished the contract, the sultan asked Aladdin whether he wished to conclude the ceremony that day. "First," replied Aladdin, "I beg your permission to build a palace across from yours, so that I may receive the princess in the style she deserves.” The sultan agreed, and Aladdin took leave in the manner of one who had grown up entirely at the court.

Aladdin got back on his horse and returned home the way he came, through the same crowds who cheered his passage and wished him every joy. Once home, he took the lamp and said to the jinni: “Build me a palace[99] out of porphyry, jasper, agate, lapis, and marble, and let it stand opposite the sultan’s palace. At the top, you shall build a great domed hall with walls of gold and silver, and with six windows in each wall. The screen on each window shall be set with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds—except for one screen, which you shall leave unfinished. There must also be a courtyard, a garden, a treasury filled with gold and silver, and kitchens, larders, laundries, dressing rooms furnished for all seasons, stables full of horses with their squires and grooms, and a team of huntsmen. Go, and return when it is done.”

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

A PALACE OF WONDERS

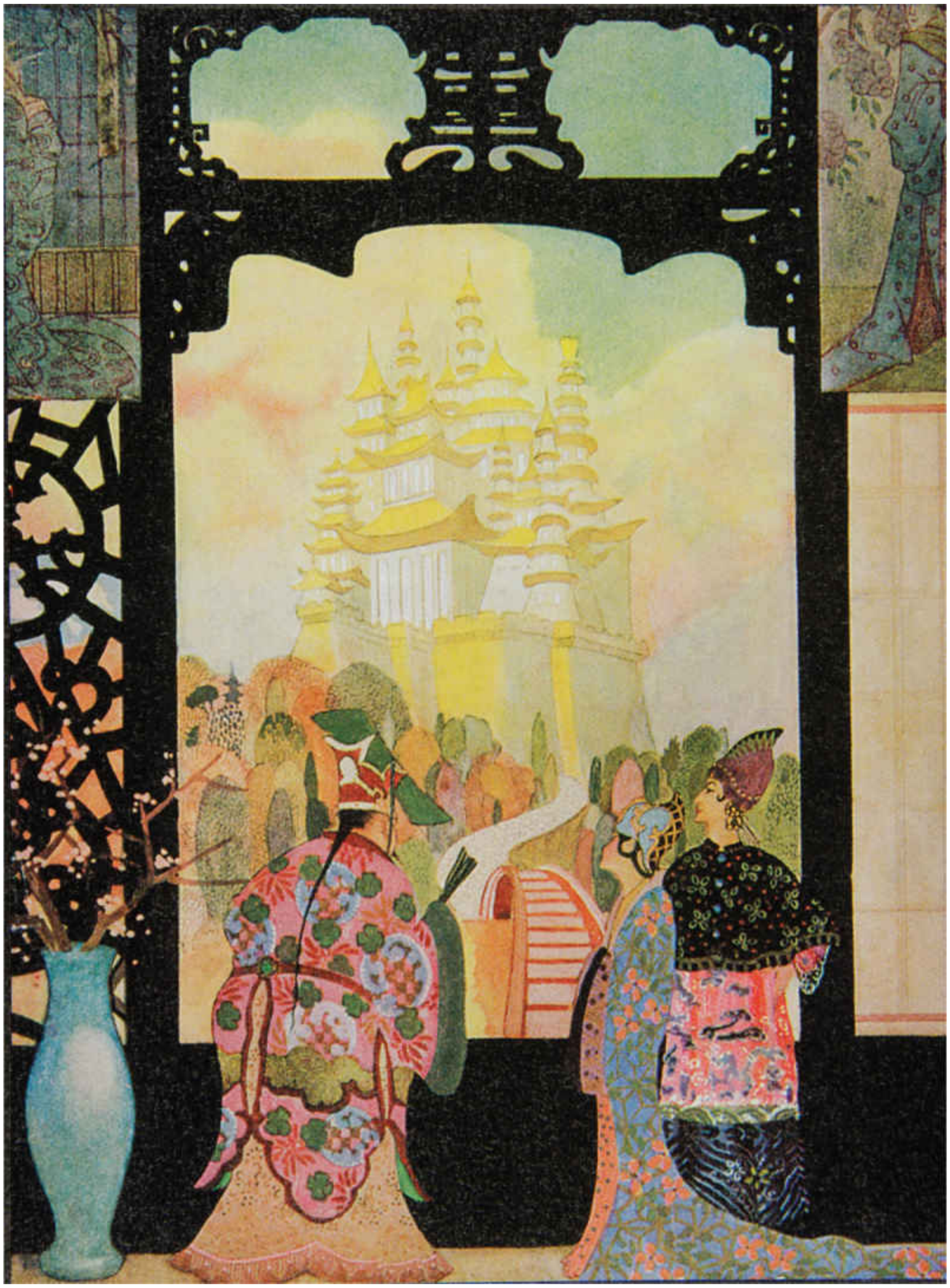
The sun had just set when Aladdin dismissed the jinni. At first light, he appeared again. “Master,” he said, “your palace is complete.”[100] A nod was enough to take them there in an instant, and Aladdin admired every room in the palace, particularly the hall with twenty-four windows, and found there more opulence and beauty than he had dared imagine. “Only one thing remains,” said Aladdin, “and that is to roll out, from the gate of the sultan’s palace to the door of the princess’s quarters in this one, a carpet of the finest velvet.” The jinni disappeared, and Aladdin saw that what he had asked for was done.

The porters, who were used to a clear view of the land outside the palace, were amazed to find it cut short, and to see a velvet carpet stretching from the sultan’s gate into the distance.[101] Their surprise only grew when they made out Aladdin’s palace, and before long, news of that wonder had spread through the court. The grand vizier was no less astonished than the others, but when he told the sultan, he tried to pass it off as the work of magic.

“But vizier,” said the sultan, “you know as well as I do that Aladdin has built a palace with the permission I gave him in your presence. After the glimpse we have had of his riches, should we be surprised that he has done it so quickly? He has shown us that, with enough money, miracles can happen overnight.[102] Your talk of magic is born of some jealousy, is it not?” He was due for a session with the council, and this stopped him from pursuing this thought any further.

When Aladdin came home, he found his mother awake, trying on one of her new outfits. He pressed her to go to the sultan’s palace with her new servants, as the sultan’s council session was drawing to a close, and to say that she had come to keep the princess company until evening, when it would be time for her to move to her palace.

She set out with her women, and though they were dressed as queens, no heads were turned as they passed, for their faces were covered and cloaks hid their sumptuous outfits. Aladdin, for his part, mounted his horse, and, having left his father’s house for the last time, carrying only the wonderful lamp that had been so crucial to his happiness, he made his way to his palace with the same ceremony as before.



Aladdin's palace appears. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

As soon as the palace guards saw Aladdin's mother approach, orders were sent to the trumpeters, cymbalists, and fife-players already dotted around the grounds, and in a moment their music sent tidings of joy across the city. Merchants set about decking their shops[103] with carpets, cushions, and foliage, and preparing illuminations for nightfall. Craftsmen abandoned their workshops as everyone scrambled to the main square, which was now wedged between the sultan’s palace and Aladdin’s. The crowd was bewildered to see a gorgeous palace where the previous day there had been no sign of bricks or mortar.

Aladdin’s mother was greeted in grand style and ushered into the princess’s quarters by the chief eunuch. The princess embraced her, sat her on the sofa, and, as her women finished dressing her in Aladdin’s jewels, had a princely breakfast served. The sultan, who had come to see his daughter before she left his palace for Aladdin’s, also gave a royal welcome to Aladdin’s mother. She had addressed the sultan several times in public, but never before had he seen her uncovered, as she was now. Though she was aging, her features held the shape of her former beauty, and the sultan, who had only ever seen her in the simplest garb, was full of wonder to see her[104] dressed as splendidly as the princess herself. He reflected that this too must be the work of Aladdin’s wisdom.

When night fell, the princess took leave of her father. They parted in tears, and embraced each other tenderly many times, and at last the princess left the palace, with Aladdin’s mother by her side and a hundred handmaidens in their wake. They were followed by the musicians,[105] one hundred messengers, and as many eunuchs. Four hundred young pages walked in single file on either side, each bearing a torch that, combined with the palace illuminations, gave a lovely glow to the evening light.

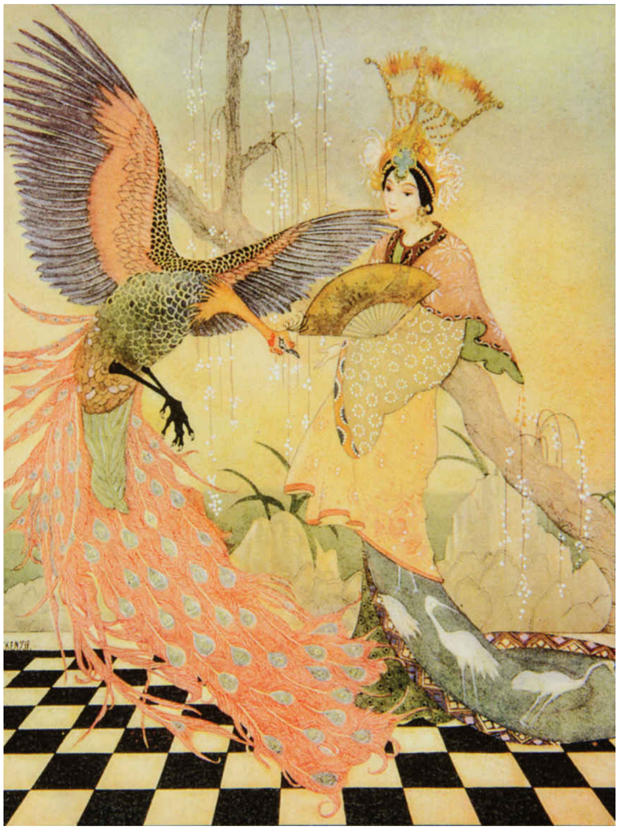
The princess walked the carpet from her father’s palace to her husband’s, and Aladdin ran to greet her at the door.

“Your eyes are to blame for my boldness,” he said, “if I have displeased you.”

“Prince,” she replied, “now that I have seen you, I submit to my father’s will without resistance.”

Taking her by the hand, Aladdin led her into a great hall lit by an infinity of candles, where the jinni had laid a sumptuous feast. Gold plates held the finest meats. The vases, bowls, and cups that crowded the table were also made of gold, and exquisitely wrought. The princess said to Aladdin: “I had not thought any place on earth could be more beautiful than my father’s palace, but the sight of this room alone proves I was mistaken.”

The princess, Aladdin, and his mother took their seats, and a chorus of women began to sing, accompanied by a consort of instruments. The princess, delighted, declared she had never heard anything like it in her father's palace. She did not know that these musicians were sprites chosen by the jinni.



Princess Budur. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme, *1919.*

After supper, a troupe of dancers replaced the musicians. They performed a series of traditional dances and were followed by a man and a woman dancing alone with striking agility. It was near midnight when, true to the Chinese custom, Aladdin rose and offered the princess his hand so that they might dance out of their own wedding.[106] Admiring eyes followed their every turn until they disappeared into the nuptial chamber.

In the morning, Aladdin's servants came to help him dress, and they chose an outfit no less fine than the one he wore for his wedding. Then he was brought one of his horses, which he rode to the sultan's palace, surrounded by a flock of slaves on all sides. The sultan embraced him, and, seating him beside him on the throne, he gave the order for lunch to be served. “Majesty,” said Aladdin, “I beg you to relieve me of that honor today, and instead to give me the pleasure of hosting you in the princess’s palace, with your grand vizier and the gentlemen of the court.” The sultan agreed, and he set off at once on foot, as the journey was not long, with Aladdin on his right, the grand vizier on his left, and the gentlemen in their wake.

The beauty of Aladdin’s palace astounded the sultan; inside, he could not keep from exclaiming in every room. When he entered the hall with twenty-four windows, and saw the screens inlaid with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds,[107] and Aladdin remarked that they were just as richly made on the outside, the sultan could do no more than stand there as though stunned. After remaining some time in this state, he said, “This palace is one of the wonders of the world. Where else in the universe are walls built of gold and silver, and windows shielded by screens studded with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds? Never on earth was such a thing ever seen!”

The sultan wished to study the beauty of the twenty-four windows. Counting them, he found that only twenty-three were of the same caliber, and that the twenty-fourth had remained unfinished.

“Vizier,” he said, for the vizier had taken it upon himself to remain by his side, “it is strange that such a fine room should have this imperfection.”

“It seems,” replied the vizier, “that Aladdin was pressed for time, and was unable to match this window to the others.”

Aladdin, who had slipped away from the sultan to give a few orders, now returned.

“My son,” said the sultan, “this must be the most admirable room in the world. Only one thing surprises me. Was it by accident or negligence that one window was left unfinished?”

“It was by design,” said Aladdin. “I told the workers to leave it so, as I wished Your Majesty to have the glory of completing this room, and with it the palace.”

The sultan accepted with pleasure and sent for the best goldsmiths and jewelers in the capital.

Aladdin led the sultan into the dining hall. There they were met by the princess, who greeted her father with a happy smile. Two tables heaved under a feast arranged on gold platters. The sultan took his place at the first, along with the princess, Aladdin, and the grand vizier. All the lords of the court sat at the second. The sultan confessed that he had never tasted such delicious fare, and he said the same of the wine. Even more impressive were the side tables heavy with vials, bowls, and cups of solid gold, all studded with gems. No less charming were the singers ranged around the room, whose voices mingled in harmony with the music of trumpets, cymbals, and drums that came to them from outside.

As the sultan rose from the table, news came that the jewelers and goldsmiths had arrived. Returning to the hall with twenty-four windows, he pointed out the imperfect one to the craftsmen. "I have called you here to mend this window, and to match it to the perfection of the others. Inspect it, and set to work without delay."

The jewelers and goldsmiths studied the twenty-three remaining windows with great care. When they had consulted each other, and discussed what each might contribute to the task, they went back to the sultan. The first jeweler spoke.

"Majesty," he said, "we are all ready to put our skills at your service, but we lack the materials[108] for the task you require; our gemstones are neither precious enough, nor in sufficient quantity, to match this screen to the others."

"I have all the gems you need," said the sultan. "Come to my palace and take your pick."

The sultan sent for his precious stones, and the jewelers took a great many of them, especially those Aladdin had brought. They set to work with them but made little progress, and they had to return many times for more. In a month, they had not finished half the work. They had used up all the sultan's gemstones, and even had to draw on the grand vizier's collection, yet all they had to show for it was a half-completed screen.

Aladdin, knowing that their task was in vain, told them not only to put down their tools but also to undo all their work and carry the jewels back. The work that had taken weeks was undone in a few hours. Alone again, Aladdin pulled out the lamp and commanded the jinni to finish the window.

The craftsmen arrived at the palace and were ushered into the sultan's quarters. The first jeweler, presenting the stones they brought back, spoke for them all: "Your Majesty knows how long we have labored on our task. We were well advanced when Aladdin ordered us to stop, and to undo our previous work and return the gemstones we had borrowed."

The sultan sent for his horse at once and went back to see Aladdin. "I have come in person," said the sultan, "to ask your reasons for leaving such a rare and gorgeous room unfinished." Aladdin concealed the true reason, which was that the sultan was not rich enough in gemstones to finish the screen. Still, in order to impress on him that the palace surpassed not only the sultan's own, but any other on earth, Aladdin answered, "It is true that Your Majesty saw this room unfinished, but I beg you to tell me now if it lacks anything."

The sultan made for the unfinished window, and, finding it just like the others, he doubted his own eyes. He inspected the windows on either side, then all the others, and when he was convinced that the screen that had cost him so many weeks of labor had been perfected in so short a time, he embraced Aladdin and kissed him between the eyes.

The sultan returned to his palace alone, the way he had come. There he found the grand vizier waiting for him. Still in wonder at the miracle he had just seen, he recounted it in terms that left the minister in little doubt that things were not as they seemed, and that Aladdin's palace was the work of magic, as he had suggested to the sultan almost as soon as the palace appeared. He tried to repeat himself. "Vizier," interrupted the sultan, "you have made this point before. I see you have not yet recovered from the failure of my daughter's marriage to your son."

The grand vizier, not wishing to confront the sultan, let him think as he pleased. Every morning, on waking, the sultan would look out of the window that gave a view of Aladdin's palace, and he returned several times a day to admire it.

Aladdin, meanwhile, did not stay indoors for long. He made sure to be seen by the townspeople[109] at least once a week, either by varying the mosques he attended for prayer, or by calling on the grand vizier, or by paying the lords of the court, whom he often entertained in his palace, the honor of returning their visit. Every time he went out, he had two servants follow his horse and cast handfuls of gold coins into the crowds as they passed. Not a soul came knocking at his door in need who did not leave satisfied.

As Aladdin went hunting at least once a week, sometimes on the fringes of the city and sometimes farther afield, he extended his charity to the country lanes and villages. His freehanded manner won him the hearts of the people, and it became common to hear them swear on his head. To these qualities, he added a sincere devotion to the welfare of his kingdom, which he displayed when a revolt broke out near the border. On hearing that the sultan had raised an army to suppress it, he begged him to let him take its lead. He prevailed, and marched the sultan's men against the rising, and proved so deft in his campaign that news of the rebels' defeat soon followed that of his departure for the battlefield. He returned a hero[110] but remained as gentle and gracious as ever.

* * *

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"The strangest story!" said her sister.

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The king decided he would spare her till the story's end and kill her the next day.

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NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

It was years into Aladdin's new life when the magician, far away in North Africa, remembered him. Though certain that Aladdin had not left the vault, it occurred to the magician to find out precisely how he had died. Being a skilled geomancer,[111] he took from a cabinet the square box he used in his readings, and, having prepared and leveled the sand, cast the points, and revealed the figures, he found that Aladdin had escaped and had married a princess, with whom he lived in great splendor.

Heat rose to the magician’s face. He knew Aladdin could only have survived by the power of the ring, and he wasted no time pondering what to do. Next morning, he set off on the Berber horse in his stable and traveled day and night until he reached the capital of the Chinese kingdom in question. He dismounted at a khan, or inn, where he took a room for the night.

The next day, he wished to know before all else what people thought of Aladdin. He wandered the city and stopped at a popular meeting place where people gathered to sip a certain hot drink, familiar to him from his previous visit. A cup of the brew was set before him as soon as he found a seat. He kept an ear out and noticed that there was talk of Aladdin’s palace. Draining his cup, he approached one of those speaking, and asked him what it was about this palace that merited such praise.

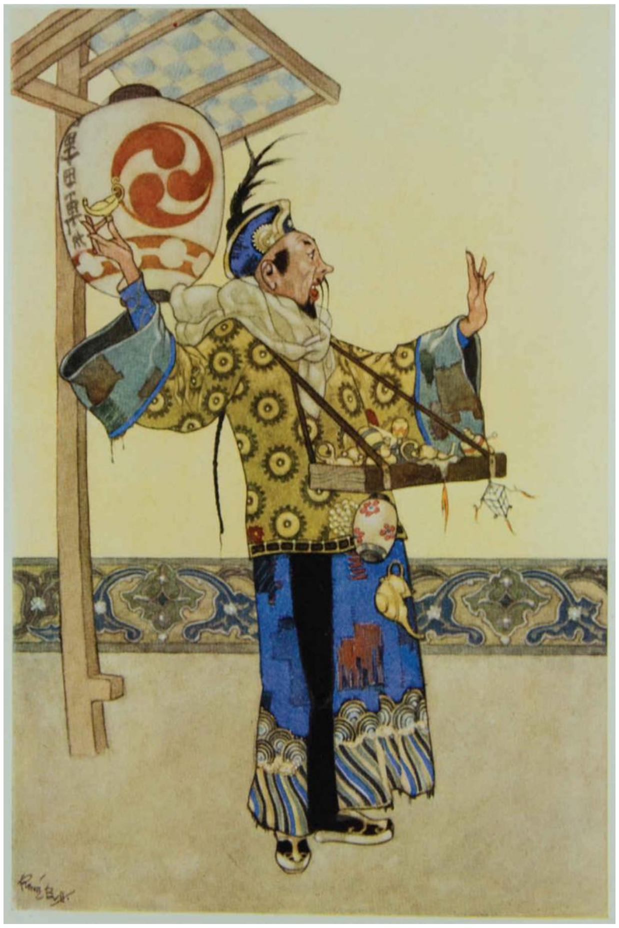
“Where have you come from?” asked the man. “Have you not heard of Prince Aladdin’s palace, the wonder of the world?[112] It is all one talks about on earth since it was built. Go and see it, and judge whether I have told you any more than the truth.”

“Forgive my ignorance,” replied the magician, “where is this wonder you speak of?”

The other man directed him, and he set out at once. When he saw the palace, he knew that it had been built by one of the jinn, who alone were capable of such marvels. Enraged, he determined to get hold of the lamp. For this, he shut himself in his room and turned again to geomancy, and the figures revealed to him that the lamp was in Aladdin’s palace. He went to see the innkeeper, and, alighting on a perfectly natural pretext for conversation, said that he had just seen Aladdin’s palace, and he related all that he had found most striking in it.

“Yet my curiosity will not be satisfied,” he added, “until I meet the master of such a marvelous place.”

“You will have no trouble finding him,” said the innkeeper. “Hardly a day goes by when he does not appear in the city. But he has been gone for three days on a hunt that is said to last eight.”



The magician began to call, “New lamps for old!” Illustration by René Bull from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

The magician waited not a minute longer. He bought a dozen copper lamps, put them in a basket, and took them to the palace. As he approached, he began to call, “New lamps for old!”[113] The children in the square, who thought him mad, ran after him jeering, but he continued to cry, “New lamps for old!” until even Princess Badr al-Budur, who was sitting in the hall with twenty-four windows, heard his voice. She sent a servant to find out what the noise was about.

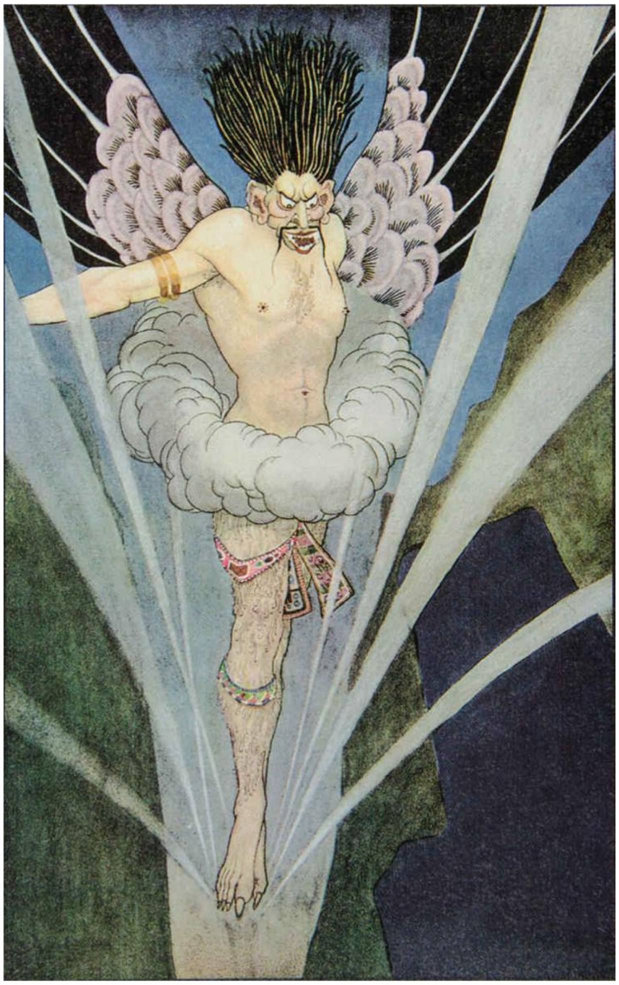
The handmaiden came back laughing, and the princess scolded her. “Princess,” replied the servant, “who could keep from laughing at the sight of a madman offering new lamps for old ones?” On hearing this, another handmaiden said, “There is an old lamp in that alcove which he can have. Then we’ll see if he really is mad enough to swap a new lamp for an old one.”

This was Aladdin’s magic lamp, which he had to thank for the dream his life had become, and which he had left there before setting out on his hunt. The princess, who knew nothing of its value,[114] sent a eunuch to make the exchange. He went down and said to the magician, “Give me a new lamp in return for this.”

The magician had no doubt that this was the lamp he sought. There could hardly be another like it in Aladdin’s palace, where everything else was made of gold or silver. He snatched it and told the servant to take his pick. The square rang out with jeers, but the magician paid them no attention and walked away. He made his way through the back streets, and, in a deserted alley, abandoned the basket with its new lamps, as he had no more use for them. Then he left through the city gates and pressed on into the countryside. He settled in a lonely place until nightfall, when at last he pulled the lamp from his cloak and rubbed it. The jinni appeared: “What is your command?”[115] The magician asked to be carried, along with the palace and the princess in it,[116] to a certain place in North Africa.

In the morning, the sultan looked out of the window to admire Aladdin’s palace and saw only empty space. He rubbed his eyes and saw nothing more, though the air was clear, the sky blue, and the early morning picked out all things distinctly. “I am not mistaken,” he said to himself. “It stood right there. If it had collapsed, it would still lie there in ruins, and if the earth had swallowed it up, some trace of it would remain.”

He sent for the grand vizier, who arrived in such haste that he did not notice anything out of place. But now he, too, was lost in astonishment. Again he put it down to magic, and this time the sultan could hardly argue. “Where is that impostor?” he cried. “Off with his head!”[117]



The jinni of the lamp appeared. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

Thirty horsemen were sent to bring Aladdin back in chains. They met him riding home, five or six leagues from the city. “Prince Aladdin,” said the officer, “it is with great regret that we must arrest you and lead you to the sultan as a criminal of the state. We beg you not to think ill of us for carrying out our duty, and to forgive us.”

These words startled Aladdin, who asked the officer what crime he was accused of, but neither the officer nor his men could say. As Aladdin saw that his men were outnumbered by the guard, and that some of them had already deserted him, he dismounted. “Here I am,” he said, “but know that I am guilty of no crime, neither against the sultan nor the state.” A long, thick chain was slipped around his neck and torso, so that he could not move his arms, and he was led on foot back to the city.

The people, who loved him,[118] and who saw that he was walking to his death, took up their swords, and those who had none armed themselves with stones, and they went after the horsemen. Soon they had grown to such a number that it was all the guard could do to keep the people from taking Aladdin before they reached the sultan. The men took care to fill the streets where they walked, spreading out as they widened and closing ranks as they thinned, and in this way arrived at the palace.

Aladdin was carried before the sultan, who ordered the executioner to cut off his head. The executioner took hold of Aladdin, removed the chain that bound his body, and, after laying down a strip of hide stained with the blood of a thousand other convicts he had killed, pushed Aladdin to his knees and covered his eyes. Then he drew his sword, sent it flying through the air three times to try its swing, and waited for the sultan's signal.

At that instant, the grand vizier noticed that the crowd had overcome the guards and were now scaling the walls of the palace. Just as the sultan drew breath to give the signal, the vizier said, "Majesty, I beg you to consider what you are about to do. You run the risk of seeing your palace stormed, a disaster which could prove deadly."

"My palace stormed!" said the sultan. "Who would dare to attempt such a thing?"

"If you were to cast your eyes down to the palace walls and into the square, you would know the truth of what I say."

Horrified by the unrest in the square, the sultan called for the executioner to stay his hand. He had Aladdin unbound, and pardoned him in front of the crowd. Overjoyed to have saved the life of a man they loved, the insurgents relayed the news to those around them, who passed it on to the others beyond. The guards, who had climbed to the highest terraces, made Aladdin's pardon known to the entire city. The sultan's merciful gesture calmed the crowd, eased the turmoil in the square, and sent everyone quietly home.

When he found himself free, Aladdin begged to know his crime. "Do you claim to ignore it?" said the sultan. "Come here," and he showed him from the window the place where his palace had been. Aladdin looked and saw nothing. There was only empty space, the land where his palace had stood. Unable to guess what had become of it, he was too shocked to say a single word.

“Tell me, then,” said the sultan impatiently, “what you have done with your palace and my daughter. The first is of no concern to me, but without my daughter I cannot live. You must bring her back or lose your head, and this time I shall not be stopped.”

Aladdin begged the sultan to grant him forty days,[119] promising that if he failed to find her, he would go to his death without resistance.

“Your wish is granted,” said the sultan, “but do not think you can escape. Wherever on earth you go, I will find you.”

* * *

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THE PRINCESS’S REVENGE

ALADDIN LEFT the palace heavyhearted. With downcast eyes, he passed through the courtyards, as the guards, who had been his friends, turned their backs to him. Had they approached him instead, they would not have recognized him;[120] he hardly recognized himself, and he was no longer sure of his own mind. For three days, he roamed the city like a madman, asking everyone he met where his palace was. Some only laughed at him, but the wisest were moved to pity. He wandered about, irresolute, living on the charity of others.

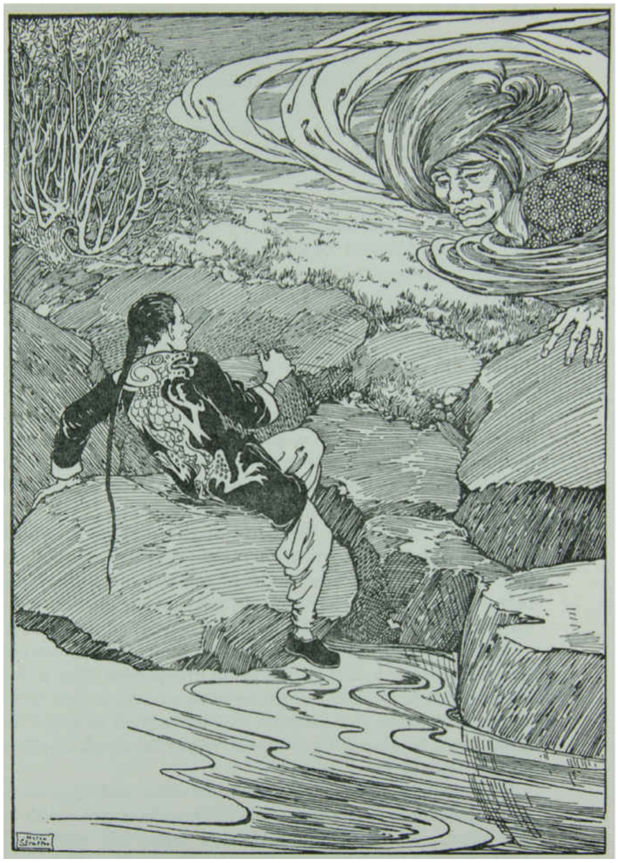
At last, he set out for the countryside, and, after crossing many wildernesses in an agony of doubt, at nightfall he reached a river. Despair came over him. He decided to throw himself in, but, being a good Muslim, first knelt to say his prayers. He leaned down to the water’s edge to wash his face and hands, but the riverbank was wet and he slipped. He would have been carried away had he not taken hold of a rock jutting out of the water. Happily, he still had the ring that the magician had slipped onto his finger before sending him down into the vault many years before. The ring rubbed against the rock[121] as he gripped it, and the jinni he had seen in the vault came to him once more: “What is your command? I am here to obey you as your slave, and the slave of all those who have the ring, I and the other slaves of the ring.”

“Save my life again,” said Aladdin, “and bring my palace back.”

“That is not in my power,” said the jinni. “I am only the slave of the ring. You must ask the slave of the lamp.”

“If that is so,” replied Aladdin, “I order you by the power of the ring to take me to my palace, wherever it is on earth, and to set me down under my wife’s window.”

He at once found himself on a grassy plain in North Africa, under the window of the princess, but, as the night was deep and all was quiet in the palace, he sat down at the foot of a tree and fell asleep.



The jinni of the ring came to Aladdin once more. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

He was woken by the singing of birds, and he rejoiced that he would soon be reunited with his dear Princess Badr al-Budur. As he stood under her window, waiting for her to rise, he saw clearly that all his trouble came from his having let the lamp out of his sight, and he wondered who had robbed him of it. He might have guessed, had he known that he and his palace were now in the Maghreb, which would have recalled to him the name of his sworn enemy, the Maghrebi magician, but the slave of the ring had said nothing of their whereabouts, and he had not asked.

The princess woke earlier than she had done since she had been carried to North Africa by the magician. He came to see her once a day, but she treated him so harshly each time that he had not dared take up residence there. As she was dressing, one of her women looked out of the window and saw Aladdin. The princess ran to open it, and at the noise Aladdin looked up and beamed. “There is no time to lose,” said the princess as she closed the window. “Come in through the secret door.”

The secret door was beneath the princess's quarters. Aladdin found it open and went up. The lovers embraced many times, each having believed the other lost forever. After their tearful reunion, they sat down, and Aladdin said, "Princess, before all else, for your own sake and mine, I implore you to tell me what became of the old lamp I left in the alcove of the hall with twenty-four windows."

"Alas!" she replied. "I knew the lamp was the source of our misery, but the fault is mine!" She told him how the old lamp was exchanged for a new one, and how she had been transported that night to the Maghreb, as she had learned from the traitor himself.

"Now I know the Maghrebi magician is to blame!" said Aladdin. "He is the most deceitful of men.[122] Where does he keep the lamp?"

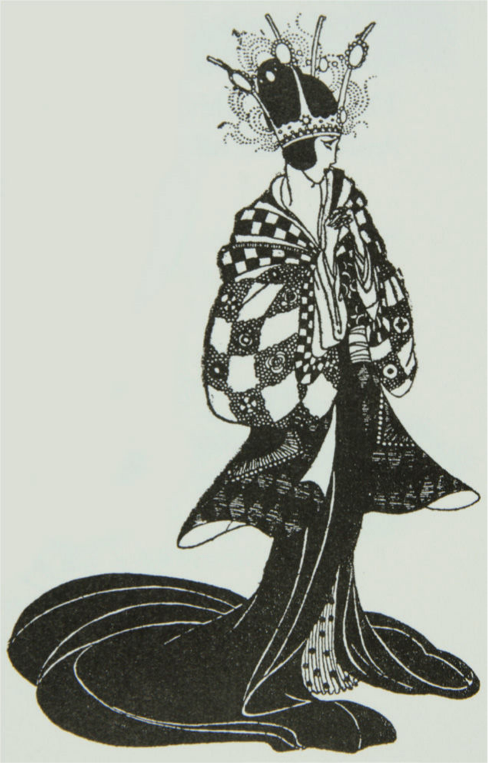
"He carries it with him in his cloak. Since I have been here, he has tried to convince me that you died by the sultan's hand, that I must break our vows and take him instead as my husband. He likes to add that you are an ingrate and that you owe your fortune to him, but I only reply with my tears. I suspect he intends to sit out my grief in the hope that I will change my mind, and to use violence if I persist."

Aladdin comforted her and said he would return around noon in a different guise. He traded clothes with a peasant he met on the road, and, after walking to the nearest town, bought a certain powder from the apothecary before returning to his palace. The secret door was opened at once, and he went up.

"Princess," he said, "the loathing you bear your abductor will perhaps make it difficult for you to follow my advice. But it is essential that you dissemble[123] if you wish to be delivered from your captivity. Put on your finest dress and receive the magician warmly when he comes. Tell him you have forgotten me and invite him to dine with you, and say that you wish to taste the wine of his country. He will go and fetch some. Meanwhile, when the table is laid, pour this powder into one of the drinking cups, and tell the handmaiden who waits on you to bring you that cup, filled with wine, on your signal. When the magician returns, after you have eaten and drunk your fill, have her bring you the cup with the powder and offer to change your cup for his. He will be too charmed to refuse, will drain the cup to flatter you, and will die instantly."

“I confess,” said the princess, “that I cannot contemplate such advances to the magician without shuddering. Yet what measures would I not take against such a cruel enemy! I will do as you advise, since my happiness depends on it, as well as yours.” When they were agreed, Aladdin left the palace and spent the rest of the day nearby, waiting for night.

Princess Badr al-Budur, grieving the loss of her husband Aladdin, whom she loved more out of inclination than duty,[124] and of her father the sultan, had neglected to look after herself since that painful separation. She had even forgotten the grooming habits so well suited to her sex, particularly since the magician had first come to see her, and she learned from her handmaidens, who recognized him, that it was he who had taken the old lamp in exchange for the new one, and by that trickery brought about the horror of her present state. But the chance to seek her vengeance, so much sooner than she had dared to hope, made her resolve to gratify Aladdin, and as soon as he withdrew, she had her women arrange her hair, and she picked out the dress best suited to her purpose. She chose a golden belt studded with diamonds[125] and matched it to a string of pearls. Her ruby bracelets set off the splendor of the necklace and the belt.



The princess Badr al-Budur. Illustration by Thomas Mackenzie from Aladdin in Rhyme *(1919).*

When the princess was dressed, she consulted her mirror and her handmaidens, and, finding that she had done all she could to flatter the magician’s passion, she sat waiting for him on the sofa.

The magician entered the room with twenty-four windows at his usual hour. The princess rose and received him with smiles, gesturing to the seat she wished him to take, a courtesy she had not yet shown him. The magician, more dazzled by the princess’s eyes than by the jewels that framed her, was amazed. Her splendid appearance, softened by a certain graceful air, was so unlike the woman who had greeted him thus far that he reeled. First he tried to perch on the edge of the sofa, but, as he saw that the princess would not take her own seat until he sat where she wished him to, he obeyed.

Then, with a look that led him to believe she did not find him so odious as she had previously hinted, the princess spoke. “You are no doubt surprised,” she said, “to find me so changed today, but your confusion will perhaps cease when I tell you that I am of a nature so averse to sorrow and to gloom that I try to banish all cares as soon as I find that their cause has passed. I have considered what you told me of Aladdin’s fate, and I know that all my tears will not bring him back. That is why, having honored my husband even into the grave, I am resolved to mourn no more, and have invited you to dine with me. But I have only wines from China, and long to taste those of the Maghreb.”

The magician, who had given up all hope of gaining the princess’s favor, could hardly say a word of thanks without faltering, and, to steady himself, fell on the subject of the wine. He said that of all the Maghreb’s blessings, its wine was among the greatest, and none was finer than that of the region where she found herself now, that seven years ago it produced a vintage unsurpassed in quality, and that he had a whole case of it that he had yet to open.

“With my princess’s permission,” he said, “I will go and fetch two bottles.”

“I would not wish to trouble you,” said the princess. “Should you not send someone in your place?”

“I must go myself,” replied the magician, “for no one else knows where I keep the cellar key, and no one but me knows how to use it.”

“If that is so,” said the princess, “hurry back.”

Drunk on the promise of happiness, the magician flew to his cellar, and the princess, knowing he would be quick, hastened to empty Aladdin’s powder into one of her cups. When he returned, they took their seats, and the princess drank to his health.

“You were right,” she said, “to praise your wine. It is the best I have tasted.”

“Princess,” he replied as he lifted his own cup, “my wine is made sweeter by your approval. I am pleased,” he added after a sip, “to have kept this vintage for such a happy occasion, for never have I tasted anything so fine.”

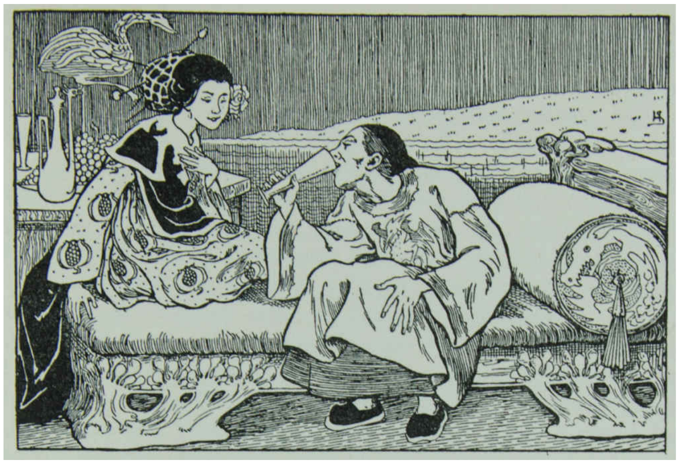
When they had eaten their fill, the princess beckoned to her handmaiden for two more cups. “In China,” she said to the magician, “it is customary for lovers to drink to each other’s health by exchanging their cups.” She presented her cup to him and reached out her other hand to take his. The magician reciprocated, seeing in this favor the surest sign that he had conquered the princess’s heart.

"Princess," he said, "I see that we Maghrebis have much to learn[126] from the Chinese in the art of love. I shall not forget this custom, nor shall I forget that by giving me your cup to drink from, you have restored my hope in a life I would have despaired of, had your cruelty gone on for much longer."

Tiring of these effusions, the princess said, "Let us drink! You may resume your thoughts in a moment," and the magician was so keen to please her that he drained his cup before she had taken a sip from hers. To show his enthusiasm, he had tipped his head back to drink, and there he remained for some time after he finished, until the princess saw his eyes roll back in his head, and he died.

The princess had no need to tell the women to let Aladdin in. Her handmaidens had arranged themselves at equal intervals between the dining hall and the bottom of the stairs, so that the secret door was opened almost as soon as the magician fell back.

Aladdin entered the dining hall and said to the princess, who was running to embrace him, "Princess, it is not yet time. Leave me now, as I have more to do."



She presented her cup to him. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

When he was alone, he went to the lifeless body of the magician, took the lamp from his cloak, and commanded the jinni to return them to China. With only the slightest of tremors, the palace returned to its position[127] in front of the sultan's palace.

The sultan, who believed he had lost his daughter, had been inconsolable since her abduction. He hardly slept, and instead of avoiding those places that might remind him of his sorrow, he sought them out. Now it was not just in the mornings, but several times a day that he went to the window whose view he used to admire and stood there in tears, alone with the memory of what he most loved and would see no more. The following morning, he was so wrapped in his own sorrow that he cast only a brief glance at the view. Noticing that the space was filled, he first imagined it to be the effect of mist, but, looking closer, he was in no doubt that it was Aladdin's palace, and the pleasure of that sight chased grief from his heart.

He rode there as fast as he could. Aladdin, anticipating his arrival, had risen at first light, and, having dressed in his finest clothes, saw the sultan arrive. He went down in time to help him dismount. "I cannot say a word," said the sultan, "before I have seen my daughter." Aladdin led him to her, and the sultan covered her in kisses, his face wet with tears. It was a long time before he spoke.

"My daughter," he said at last, "I suspect it is the joy of seeing me again that makes you look as though no evil has befallen you, yet you must surely have suffered. One is not transported, along with one's entire palace, to an unknown place as suddenly as you were without great terrors. Tell me what happened, and conceal nothing."

"Majesty," said the princess, "if I seem well to you, consider that I began to breathe only yesterday, thanks to Aladdin, my husband and savior,[128] whose loss I had mourned, and that the pleasure of seeing him again has restored me by degrees to my former state. The pain I suffered was only that of being wrenched from Your Majesty and from my husband, whom I feared had fallen prey to your rage, innocent as he was. I suffered less from the insolence of my abductor, whose manner I found repulsive but whom I was able to keep at bay by the power I had over him. Besides, I was no more restrained than you see me now. As for my abduction itself, Aladdin played no part: I am the only cause, though I am innocent."

To convince the sultan, she told him how the magician had come disguised as a merchant trading old lamps for new ones, and how easily she had given away Aladdin's lamp, unaware as she was of its secret power; how she and the palace were transported to the Maghreb at once by the magician; how he had been brazen enough to ask for her hand; how she suffered before Aladdin arrived; how, when he did, they plotted together to remove the lamp from the magician; and how they succeeded, thanks to their subterfuge and the drinking cup.

Aladdin had little more to add. “When they let me in through the secret door,” he said, “and I saw the traitor lying lifeless on the sofa, I told the princess to return to her quarters with her handmaidens and eunuchs. Alone, I took the lamp from his cloak[129] and employed the same secret he had used to remove the palace and the princess, to restore them both to their place. If you were to go up to the dining hall, you would see the magician punished as he deserved.”

The sultan went up, and when he saw the magician lying dead, his face already livid from the poison, he embraced Aladdin, and announced a feast of ten days. The magician’s corpse was taken out and left on a public road to be pecked at by birds and animals. So it was that Aladdin escaped death[130] for the second time, but it was not to be the last.

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THE MAGICIAN’S BROTHER

THE MAGHREBI MAGICIAN had a younger brother who was even more wicked,[131] and no less skilled in the art of magic. Because they were not always in the same place, and one was often in the west while the other was in the east, every year they both took to geomancy to see whether the other needed help.

In the sand, he saw that his brother had died a sudden death from poison, and he traveled to China to avenge him. He heard talk of a pious woman named Fatima who was renowned for her miracles, and he asked what she could do. “Can it be,” he was told, “that you have not seen this woman? Her austerity has won the admiration of the whole city. She does not leave her hermitage except for Mondays and Fridays, when she appears in the city and goes about performing charitable deeds, and healing anyone who complains of headache with her hands.”

The magician went straight to the hermitage of Fatima the holy woman,[132] as she was known to the city. He had only to lift the latch to enter, and he closed the door soundlessly behind him. Inside he found Fatima, lit by the moon, asleep on a thin mat. He held a dagger to her heart and shook her awake. “If you make a sound,” he said, “I will kill you, so do as I say.”

Fatima, who slept in her habit, rose in terror. “Have no fear,” said the magician. “I only want your clothes.[133] Give them to me and take mine.” They made the exchange, and he asked her to color his face like hers. Fatima led him into her cell, lit her lamp, and, dipping a brush into a vase, painted his face with its solution. Then she covered his hair with her own headdress, as well as a veil, and showed him how to conceal his face with it when he went around town. At last, she slipped around his neck a long rosary that hung down to his belly, and, giving him her walking stick, she led him to the mirror. “Look at yourself,” she said, “you are just like me.” The magician was satisfied with his appearance, but he did not keep his promise to Fatima. Not wanting to shed blood by killing her with his dagger, he strangled her, dragged her body by the feet to the cistern in the hermitage, and threw her into it.

Disguised as Fatima, the magician went out into the city the next day. A crowd bloomed around the holy woman. Some asked him to pray for them, others kissed his hand, others only dared touch the hem of his dress, and others offered their bent heads to his hands. He obliged them by letting his fingers float over them, muttering words of prayer, and imitated the holy woman so well that everyone took him for her. After stopping many times to attend to such people, who derived neither help nor harm from this contact with his fingers, at last he reached the square outside Aladdin's palace, where the crowds pressed around him all the more. The strongest and most zealous elbowed their way through the hordes, sending up a cry of indignation so loud that Princess Badr al-Budur, in the hall with twenty-four windows, heard it.

The princess asked what the noise was, and, as nobody could tell her, she sent one of her women to find out. After looking through one of the screens, she informed her that the clamor came from the crowd who surrounded the holy woman, hoping to be healed by her hands.

The princess had long heard of the holy woman's virtues, so she dispatched a eunuch to bring her in. When the magician, who hid a demonic heart beneath his saintly cloak, was introduced to the princess, he began by reciting a litany of wishes and prayers for her health, her prosperity, and anything else she might desire. When the deceiver had finished his effusions, the princess said, "My good mother, thank you for your prayers. I hope God will hear them. Come and sit by me."[134] The dissembler sat down with feigned modesty, and the princess continued, "I have one favor to ask, which you must not refuse me: that is for you to stay with me and tell me about your life, so that I may learn by your example how best to serve God."

"Princess," replied the impostor, "I beg you not to ask such a favor of me, for it would require me to neglect my prayers." "I would not dream of it," replied the princess. "I have many empty apartments: Choose whichever suits you best, and use them as you would your hermitage."

The magician, whose only aim was to penetrate Aladdin's palace, where he would be at liberty to carry out his wicked scheme under the protection of the princess, did not resist much longer. He followed the princess, and of all the apartments she showed him, he chose the smallest, and said insincerely that it was too good for him, and that he only accepted it to please her.

The princess wanted to bring the holy woman back to the great hall and dine with her there, but, as the magician would have to uncover his face to eat and feared that he would be found out, he begged her to let him take his meal in his room, since he only dined on bread and a handful of dried fruit. After dinner, the pretender joined the princess. “My good woman,” the princess said, “how pleased I am that you are here to bless this palace. I shall take you around all its rooms, but first tell me what you think of this hall.”

The hoodwinker, who had kept his head bent thus far, the better to play his role, at last looked up, and, when he had considered the room, said, “This hall is truly splendid. But in my opinion, worthless as it is, I believe one thing is missing. If this room had a rukh’s egg[135] hanging from its dome, it would be the wonder of the world.”

“Good woman,” said the princess, “what sort of bird is a rukh, and where are its eggs to be found?”

“It is an enormous bird,” said the swindler, “which lives on the peak of Mount Caucasus. The architect of your palace should have no trouble finding one.”

The princess could think of nothing but the rukh’s egg, and she resolved to ask Aladdin about it when he returned from his hunt. He had been gone six days, and he returned the same evening as the charlatan withdrew to his apartment. As he embraced the princess, it seemed to him that she greeted him more coolly than usual.

“Has anything happened in my absence to upset you?” he asked. “Whatever the clouds hanging over you, there is nothing in my power I would not do to dispel them.”

“There is something,” said the princess, “but it is very trivial. I believe that our palace is the most splendid that exists on earth, but let me tell you what occurred to me as I examined the hall with twenty-four windows. Do you not think it would be even more perfect if a rukh’s egg hung suspended from its dome?”

“Princess,” replied Aladdin, “you have only to say that a rukh’s egg is missing from this room for me to find the same fault with it, and to set it right at once.”

Aladdin ran up to the hall with twenty-four windows and summoned the jinni. “What this room lacks,” he said, “is a rukh’s egg hanging from the dome. I ask you, in the name of the lamp, to make up for this deficiency at once.”

At that moment, the jinni gave such a terrible shriek that the room shook and Aladdin faltered on his feet. “What’s that?” roared the jinni. “Is it not enough that I have done everything to serve you? Must I now bring you my master[136] and hang him from the dome of your dining hall? For that outrage, you deserve to be burnt to ashes, along with your wife and the rest of your palace. But you are lucky that this order does not come from you. Its real author is the brother of the Maghrebi magician, who is now in your palace, disguised as Fatima the holy woman, whom he assassinated to take her place! It was he who put that idea into your wife’s head. He wants to kill you; it is up to you to save yourself.”

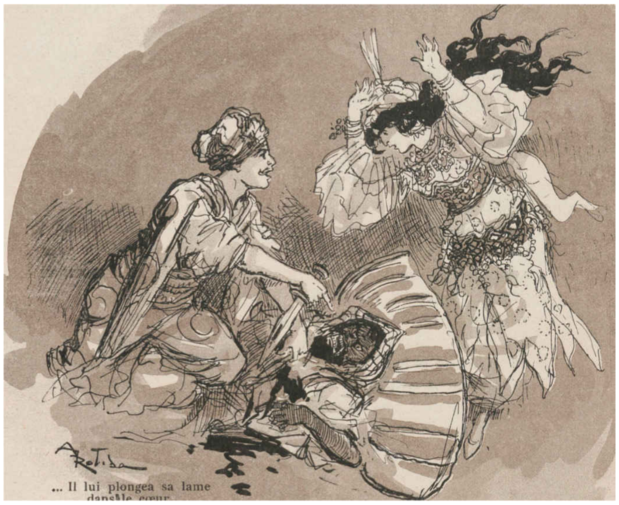
With these words, he disappeared.

Aladdin had heard about Fatima the holy woman and her reputation for curing sore heads. He returned to the princess’s apartments and said a violent headache had come over him. The princess sent for Fatima. “Come here, good woman,” said Aladdin to the fraud. “My head aches. I implore your help and entrust myself to your prayers, and hope that you will not refuse me the blessings you have granted to so many other unfortunates.” He rose with his head lowered, and the trickster moved toward him holding a dagger beneath his habit. Aladdin seized his hand[137] before he could raise it, drove the dagger through his heart, and threw him lifeless to the ground.

“What have you done?” cried the princess. “You have killed the holy woman!”

“No,” said Aladdin, “it is not Fatima I have killed,” and he told her how she had been deceived.

So it was that Aladdin was saved from the two wicked brothers. Some years later, the sultan died at a great age. As he left no sons, Princess Badr al-Budur succeeded him, and shared her power with Aladdin. They reigned together for many years[138] and left behind them a brilliant succession.


A Robida
... Il lui plongea sa lame
dans le cœur

Aladdin drove the dagger through his heart. Illustration by Albert Robida from Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes *(1909).*

EPILOGUE

“Majesty,” said Shahrazad as she finished the tale of the wonderful lamp, “you will have recognized in the Maghrebi magician the mark of a disturbed mind, a man gripped by the mania of wanting things,[139] whose foul methods led him to great riches, only to take them away from him, for he showed himself unworthy of them. In Aladdin, on the other hand, you will have seen a man who, though born to a humble home, rose to be king thanks to the same riches, which he acquired without having sought them, and which flowed to him in proportion with his need and his desire.

“As for the figure of the sultan, you will have learned from him how even the fairest monarch courts danger, and risks even losing his crown,[140] if he dares to act against natural justice, and if intemperate haste moves him to condemn an innocent man to death before giving him his say. You will, in the end, have recoiled from the crimes of the two brothers: One of them paid for his love of gold with his life; the other lost his life and his religion to avenge that villain, and, like him, reaped the reward of his wickedness."

The sultan expressed to Shahrazad, his wife, his great delight at the marvelous workings of the lamp, and the pleasure he took from the stories[141] she told him night after night, for they were enchanting, and almost always underpinned by a useful moral. He could see how deftly Shahrazad spun them one after the other, and did not take exception to these devices, for they allowed him to defer the promise he had so solemnly made, which was to keep each wife for one night only and put her to death in the morning. His only concern, in fact, was that her well of stories appeared to have run dry.

For this reason, having heard the end of the tale of Aladdin and Princess Badr al-Budur, which was quite unlike anything he had heard before, he did not wait for Dunyazad and woke his wife himself as soon as morning broke, and asked her if she had reached the end of her tales.

"The end of my tales!" said Shahrazad. "I am far from it. Their number is so great that even I would be quite incapable of counting them. My only fear is that Your Majesty should tire of my voice before I have told them all."

"Banish your fears," said the sultan, "and if you will, tell me another one."

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1. *capital of one of China's vast and wealthy kingdoms:* The story of "Aladdin" is set in China, but Robert Irwin argues that this setting "is purely notional," since the story takes place in a land that is clearly Muslim (see "Afterword"). In this story, as in the *Nights* story cycle of "The Hunchback," China simply means somewhere far, far away. However, some illustrators and theater directors took the Chinese setting seriously, as did the producers of an *Arabian Nights* miniseries for television in 2000.

2. *This tailor was very poor:* The humble background of Aladdin as the son of a poor tailor is an essential element of the story. Retellings of the story in the oral narrative cultures of a number of European countries always retain this low social status, but Aladdin's father may be identified as a shoemaker, a broom-maker, or a swineherd, without altering the essential pattern of the story (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 80).

3. *He grew to be cruel, stubborn, and rebellious:* Aladdin is a decidedly unsympathetic hero at the beginning of the story and does not show any sign of deserving his good fortune. Gerhardt notes that the strong note of moral disapproval at the start is quite unusual in the *Nights*, where laziness is not normally considered a major fault (p. 325).

4. *could still his son's wandering mind:* Hanna Diyab himself was impatient with apprenticeship. He seems to have been expected to pursue a profession as a merchant, but he eventually left his position with a French merchant in Aleppo to run away with several friends to a monastery.

5. *he died a few months later:* The fatherless young man is a classic protagonist of *Nights* tales, and there is a recurrent saying in the stories that a son is the "lamp of a dark house" (Burton, *Supplemental Nights*, vol. 3, p. 55, n. 1). Diyab likely sympathized with Aladdin's situation, as he also lost his father in his youth.

6. *Aladdin gave in fully to his dissolute ways:* The plots of *Nights* stories are often initiated by a son's squandering of his inheritance, or, in this case, a refusal to take up his father's trade or business. Aladdin's behavior at the beginning of the story resembles that of "Abu Muhammad the Lazy." Poor and slothful, Abu Muhammad gives a little money to a merchant sailing for China and ends up with a monkey (a jinni in disguise) and an enormous fortune.

7. *the Maghrebi magician:* In the *Nights*, there is a strong association between Maghrebis—Arab or Berber Muslims from North Africa and Spain—and the practice of magic. In the *Nights* tale of "Judar and His Brothers," the fisherman Judar encounters three Maghrebi magicians who ask him for help in retrieving a treasure from the bottom of a lake. However, these magicians are not all irredeemably evil, as the conniving brothers in the tale of "Aladdin" prove to be. Jaudar's Maghrebi magician rewards him generously for his help, and later, when he meets him again in Mecca, gives him a ring with which he can command the jinn.

8. *the art of reading faces:* This is one of many forms of divination referenced in the *Nights*.

9. *"I am your uncle":* Diyab's relationship with Paul Lucas (the French treasure hunter who brings him to Paris in 1708) mirrors Aladdin's relationship with the magician. Lucas served as a mentor to Diyab after he met him on a caravan journey from Aleppo, and he taught him about precious stones and the ruses necessary to acquire valuable objects. An analysis of the sources relating to this journey reveals that Lucas was often taken for a magician on their travels because people imagined that he was seeking objects of power.

10. *handing him two gold coins:* The magician's offer of money has an impact greater than magic at this point. It is a fitting beginning for a story that is largely focused on materialistic dreams.

11. *"I have traveled to India, to Persia, to Arabia":* Despite the supposed setting of the story in China, the magician is associated with the typical geography of the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

12. *"Aladdin is lazy":* The character of Aladdin has not always followed the pattern set in this telling of the tale. One of the earliest theatrical performances of the tale of "Aladdin," staged at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1788 by playwright John O'Keefe, turned Aladdin into a character of innate virtue whose purity was precisely what the magician required: "Seek a youth from av'rice free,/Who can feel another's grief,/Who is prompt to give relief,/Bless'd with filial piety" (Warner, p. 363). British pantomimes had more fun with Aladdin as a lazy, good-for-nothing character, but the Disney films of *Aladdin* created a more sympathetic character that seemed to draw on the thief-rogues of early films based on the *Nights*. The Disney *Aladdin* (in both the animated and the live-action version) is alone in the world and steals when he is in need, but he is marked by his generosity from the very beginning. In German filmmaker Lotte

Reiniger’s *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), Aladdin is shown industriously sewing a garment at the beginning of his story.

13. *“I struggle to feed us both”:* The stories added to the *Nights* by Diyab and Galland often indicate a sympathy for the struggles of ordinary people. In his memoir, Diyab expresses his concern for the victims of famine in Paris during the particularly harsh winter of 1708–9.

14. *“I can set you up as a cloth merchant”:* Diyab might have found this an appealing promise. He knew something of the merchant trade, having apprenticed with a French merchant through much of his youth. After his time in Paris, he returned to Aleppo to become a very successful cloth merchant.

15. *banished all doubt:* Like many of the tales added to the *Nights* by Galland and Diyab, this one gives added depth to the characters. The narrator even provides a glimpse of the internal conflict within Aladdin’s mother, a character who could easily have become a bare caricature in the hands of another storyteller. Seale’s translation restores the significance of the mother in this tale.

16. *so magnificently dressed from head to toe:* Even before he puts his hands on the magical lamp, Aladdin begins his transformation, and he is seduced by the idea that he might become someone respected in the community of merchants.

17. *the khans where the foreign merchants lodged:* This is a very familiar world for Diyab, who worked for a French merchant for a dozen years in the caravan city of Aleppo, where the khans were filled with foreign merchants and their goods.

18. *“I believe we will make something of him”:* Tzvetan Todorov has argued that Aladdin, like Sinbad, is a “narrative man,” an empty character who is merely a product of the events that unfold around him.

19. *“Now he must see those of men”:* The storytellers present the journey of Aladdin as a path to maturity. In this respect the tale serves as a prototypical coming-of-age narrative.

20. *he had never left its walls:* Like Aleppo, this was a walled city, and the story effectively captures the excitement of a young man setting out to see the wonders of the world. It was a story pattern that would have had particular appeal for Diyab, who had been in the same position as Aladdin when he had left Aleppo a year and a half before he gave this story to Galland.

21. *“I want to show you some wonderful things”:* This journey with the magician can be seen as an analogue of Diyab’s journey with Paul Lucas, in which the Syrian storyteller encountered new cities, magnificent monuments and palaces, and rich treasures.

22. *a large fountain:* The beautiful palaces that Aladdin sees are all enhanced by amazing gardens. This is typical of the tales added to the *Arabian Nights* by Galland, but this particular fountain is reminiscent of one at the palace of Versailles described by Diyab in his memoir (vol. II, pp. 23–27).

23. *“you will be a man like them”:* The language that emphasized the importance of maturity may have been added by Galland, who was anxious to impart moral lessons through these

stories.

24. *beguiling him all the while with stories:* The magician is presented as a storyteller, but he does not really tell any stories. If this is Diyab's contribution, it may be another reference to Lucas, who was known to be a wild storyteller. More likely, it is just a way of referencing the dreamlike atmosphere of storytelling within the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

25. *"rare and wonderful things":* The first stop that Diyab made with Lucas after they met on a caravan journey from Aleppo in 1707 was at Kaftin in Syria, where they took guards into the mountains to search for rare antiquities (Horta, *Marvellous Thieves*, p. 58).

26. *a few drops of fragrant oil over the fire:* This is a ritual fumigation that follows the basic patterns of spell casting within the stories of the *Nights*. The use of oil is reminiscent of the mock magical ritual used by the prince to whisk the princess away from her captor in "The Enchanted Horse," and the use of a spoken magic formula matches the opening of the cave in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

27. *"if you are to be worthy of the great reward":* The question of Aladdin's worthiness is posed within the tale itself, and later commentaries have seized upon this to suggest that the character must possess some special quality that explains why he receives the lamp. Given Galland's concern with attaching morals to the stories of the *Nights*, this is perhaps his addition.

28. *"Say the names of your father and grandfather":* This suggests the use of verbal formulas for magical effect, a practice that appears in a number of *Nights* tales.

29. *"without touching anything":* The Pre-Raphaelite poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti likened the translator's path to "that of Aladdin through the enchanted vaults: many are the precious fruits and flowers he must pass by unheeded in search for the lamp alone" (*Marvellous Thieves*, p. 225).

30. *"lead you into a garden":* The French here might be rendered as *orchard*, but Yasmine Seale preferred *garden* "for its metaphorical resonance, and the way it echoes other magical gardens, other stories of fruit forbidden."

31. *"Take the lamp":* The object of the magician's quest is the lamp, which might appear ordinary on the surface but is really an object of tremendous power. Robert Irwin (see "Afterword") argues that the treasure quest in this story suggests that it may have been sourced from Egypt, which was the great land of treasure hunts. He also notes that lamps were a symbol of magical protection in ancient Egypt and were used in divination. In another Arabic story dating to the Ottoman period, a tailor in Alexandria finds a lamp that contains a jinni. In that case, the lamp was made of decorated glass and could be hung from the ceiling—the common form of lamps produced for mosques and palaces in the Mamluk period. Aladdin's lamp has typically been depicted as an oil lamp, according to other design conventions.

32. *He slipped a ring off his finger:* The magician presents the ring to Aladdin as if it were a talisman that could protect the wearer, but he does not explain how to access its power. Richard Burton suggests, "This is against all probability and possibility" (Supp., vol. 3, p. 72, n. 3).

33. *all of them jewels:* Among the many treasures in the cave, it is the precious stones masquerading as fruit that attract the attention of Aladdin. He is presented as a naive child who has no sense of the value of these objects and who must learn this lesson. This scene might be read in terms of the education that Lucas had recently given Diyab in the special qualities possessed by gemstones. The son of a Rouen jeweler, Lucas had special expertise in this field, and he was particularly adept at acquiring gems without letting the seller suspect their true value.

34. *He filled both his pockets with these fruits:* At this stage of Aladdin's story, the treasures of the cave are primarily identified with beauty. Other writers have used Aladdin's cave to explore the notion of a treasure chamber. In Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844), Franz takes on the persona of "Aladdin" as he accepts an invitation to the subterranean palace filled with riches inhabited by "Sinbad the Sailor" (the count in disguise). As Franz enters, he says, "I only require his wonderful lamp to make me precisely like Aladdin," and he is tempted to think he has been transported to the "East" by "some good genius." He is served a magnificent meal by his host, who also provides him with a vision of perfect pleasure through a dose of hashish (chap. 31).

35. *"First give me the lamp":* The lamp—associated with dreams of freedom and prosperity—has become the defining symbol of this story and, in certain contexts, of the *Arabian Nights* as a whole. The choice of this object may have been determined by the motifs from which Diyab constructed this story, but it is telling that a lamp was one of the objects that the goatherd pulled from the tomb chamber in the first treasure-hunting expedition Diyab experienced in the company of Lucas (*Marvellous Thieves*, p. 58)

36. *the earth closed over the stone:* Hans Christian Andersen read the *Arabian Nights* as a child, and one of his stories, "The Tinder Box" (1835), mirrors the plot of "Aladdin." In the Andersen story, the protagonist is a poor soldier who is asked by a witch to climb into a hollow tree filled with treasure to retrieve a tinderbox. When she demands the tinderbox from him, he kills her and keeps the tinderbox, eventually discovering its ability to summon three dogs to do his bidding. Near the end of his life, Andersen once likened himself to Aladdin as he addressed a Danish crowd, "I cannot help thinking about Aladdin, who with the help of his magic lamp was able to create a magic castle.… I was once a poor boy down there, but thanks to God I was also granted a magic lamp, Poetry" (*Travels*, p. 380).

37. *divination by sand and by smoke:* Geomancy is a branch of divination that interprets patterns formed by tossing soil or sand or, as in this case, smoke. Irwin notes that a particular fascination with the practices of geomancy began in the thirteenth century in North Africa and Egypt ("Afterword"). Treasure hunting was popular in Arab lands, especially in Egypt, and professional treasure hunters drew on both local lore and the occult sciences to locate objects. The strong association between magicians and treasure hunting was evident to Hanna Diyab during his travels through Egypt. His companion on that trip, Paul Lucas, was well aware that locals suspected him of being a magician as he searched for treasures, and he adopted the guise of a physician to avoid such accusations. Diyab's memoir reveals that when he joined Lucas on an expedition to an ancient obelisk, local Egyptians thought Lucas was a sorcerer who was going to use a spell to uncover the treasure they believed was buried beneath the monument (*Book of Travels*, vol. I, p. 95).

38. *seemed to him a boy of no consequence:* The narrator seems to suggest that the magician understood that he could not retrieve the lamp, so he found a boy he could manipulate to do the job and then discard. In other *Nights* stories, a magic object or a jinni seems to be destined for a particular character. In “Judar and His Brothers,” the magician requires Judar’s help if he is to retrieve a hidden treasure. In “Ali the Cairene,” the protagonist squanders his inheritance and moves to Baghdad, where he rents a haunted house. Instead of being killed (like all the house’s previous occupants), he finds that there is a treasure linked to a talisman written with his name. The jinni who haunts the house therefore delivers the treasure to Ali, and he becomes the king’s vizier. He literally does nothing to earn this favor but move to Baghdad. His luck is in his name.

39. *the ring was to be Aladdin’s salvation:* The popular card game *Magic: The Gathering* contains a series of references to the tales of the *Nights*. The *Aladdin’s Ring* card offers a powerful weapon to players, who can use it to inflict damage on a creature or another player. Other cards include the *Flying Carpet* from “Prince Ahmad,” the *Magnetic Mountain* and the *Brass Man* from “The Tale of the Third Dervish,” the *Ogre* from Sinbad’s voyages, and *Shahrazad* herself. In a clever device, the *Shahrazad* card creates a game within a game (and is therefore banned from official tournaments).

40. *Aladdin spent two days in this state:* Aladdin demonstrates resignation in the face of this calamity. In “The Story of Sinbad the Sailor,” the protagonist also goes through this stage of despair after meeting with disaster, but he always ends up taking a risk to survive. Aladdin is far more passive, and it will take the intervention of the supernatural to transform him into something more than the frightened child he is at the beginning of the story.

41. *he inadvertently rubbed the ring:* Aladdin’s invocation of the jinni of the ring happens entirely by chance, in a pattern not particularly unusual in the *1001 Nights*. In “The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler,” the protagonist initially finds a jinni by accident in an abandoned building, and later he finds a ring that commands a jinni in an underground chamber beneath a field he is helping a peasant cultivate. Both of these are chance events.

42. *“the slave of all those who wear the ring”:* The *Nights* translator Edward Lane reported that Egyptians believed that human beings could obtain the services of jinn by the use of certain invocations or by means of certain talismans. In this case, the jinni has been bound to the talisman of the ring and so must obey its possessor. The references to slavery in this story would have a distinct resonance for an English public attuned to the discourse of abolitionism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Marina Warner notes that John Rich’s production of *Aladdin, or, The Wonderful Lamp* was in demand in this time period because it ended with the jinn set free. Audiences could imagine themselves to be aligned with the cause of freedom and put the blame for the misuse of the lamp on the invisible “Master” or the Maghrebi magician—both of whom were foreigners (p. 365).

43. *“get me out of this place”:* Aladdin reacts instinctively. He does not yet understand the power of the ring and is not consciously exercising it.

44. *staggered home:* Aladdin does not think about asking the jinni of the ring to transport him home or to provide him with food. Argentine novelist César Aira points out that there is a special irony in giving the gifts of a magical ring and lamp to the character who seems to possess the least imagination about how to use such power. He concludes that there must be a real “author”

(either collective or individual) behind this tale—one who has deliberately inserted this irony (“El Realismo,” *Dossier*).

45. *“What else were we to think”:* Galland takes some time to explain the plot through Aladdin’s monologue in a manner that is characteristic of the added tales of Diyab and Galland rather than of the original Arabic stories of the *Nights*.

46. *These fruits were precious stones:* The qualities of the precious stones in this story match the quality of the diamond found by Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal in “The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid,” another story added by Diyab and Galland. The ability of the stones to project light might have been information that Diyab learned from Lucas during their time together.

47. *“the devil’s trade”:* The mother’s blanket denunciation of magic speaks more to attitudes in eighteenth-century Europe than to the views of the medieval Arab storytellers who were responsible for the early development of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Some magical practices were forbidden, but many uses of divination and talismans were documented.

48. *Aladdin’s mother fetched the lamp:* The lamp is arguably the most famous magic object that appears in the *Arabian Nights*, but versions of “Aladdin” that took shape as the story was retold orally sometimes substitute another object that suits a different cultural context. Ulrich Marzolph notes that, in a Swedish text, the poor protagonist finds a casket in a deserted house in a forest, and because he is starving, he opens it to look for food. Inside he finds another casket, and then another and another until he finds a piece of paper with the words “Lasse, my servant,” which call the jinni to his service when spoken. In a version of the story from Eastern Pomerania, a book accidentally falls from a shelf and a powerful jinni appears from between its pages. A German literary retelling from 1739 replaces the lamp with a lock that must be turned with a key to unleash its magic power (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 78–80).

49. *a jinni, hideous and gigantic:* Mohamed Abdel-Halim’s reading of Galland’s journal has led him to the conclusion that the French translator sometimes borrowed elements from the Diyab stories that he heard but did not turn into discrete *Arabian Nights* tales. He suggests that the frightening description of the jinni here was taken from the notes from “The Tale of the Sultan of Samarkand and His Three Sons,” told to Galland by Diyab on May 23, 1708 (Abdel-Halim, p. 278).

50. *“Fetch me something to eat”:* Aladdin’s request of the jinni of the lamp, like his request of the jinni of the ring in the cave, is based on urgent need. He has not yet understood the power at his disposal. The behavior of the jinni is typical of the serving jinn characters in the *Nights*. In contrast to the threatening behavior of the jinn in early stories such as “The Merchant and the Jinni” and “The Fisherman and the Jinni,” these jinn appear to be competent and responsive servants to the person who possesses the talisman to which they are attached. Novelist César Aira suggests that the jinn in “Aladdin” appear to “observe the protocol of ghosts and apparitions in literature,” speaking only when they are addressed (“El Realismo,” *Dossier*).

51. *“Could it be that the sultan has heard of our poverty”:* The suggestion that the sultan might come to the aid of his hungry subjects might be a reflection of Diyab’s concerns about the attitude of the French king to a famine-stricken populace in Paris in the spring of 1709. In his memoir, he wrote about the rationing of bread and the horrific sight of beggars starving on the

streets. On May 8, 1709, the day that Diyab delivered “The Tale of Aladdin” to Galland, there were riots over food shortages in the Paris neighborhood where the French translator lived.

52. *Nor did her son know any better:* The appearance of the silver tray, dishes, and cups will set the plot moving again. Aladdin will begin to learn what truly has value in his society and how to manage wisely the power of the lamp to produce wealth.

53. *“They are alike in size”:* The jinn, of course, are shape-shifters and can adopt any shape or size they please—a fact that is used to great comedic effect in Disney’s animated version of *Aladdin* (1992).

54. *“It is forbidden to deal with the jinn”:* The mother again expresses sentiments that do not reflect the attitudes present in the original core of the *Nights*. The jinn in the *Nights* were not considered demons, but rather creatures created from fire who might be helpful or malicious toward humans. The suspicion associated with the supernatural in modern Europe was used by Robert Louis Stevenson in his rewriting of “Aladdin.” In the story “The Bottle Imp” (1891), the protagonist buys a bottle that grants wishes, but he risks eternal damnation if he dies with the magic bottle in his possession.

55. *“He knew its power well enough”:* Aladdin’s lamp became a metaphor for freedom and prosperity. In *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville uses it to represent the special pleasures produced by the successful pursuit of the precious resource of whale oil. While the ordinary merchant seaman must “dress in the dark, and eat in the dark, and stumble in darkness to his pallet,” the whaleman “lives in light. He makes his berth an Aladdin’s lamp, and lays him down in it; so that in the pitchiest night the ship’s black hull still houses an illumination.”

56. *“lest we attract the envy of our neighbors”:* After the first use of the lamp’s power, Aladdin begins to demonstrate an ability to reason more maturely. His concern here accords with the belief that the evil eye could bring destruction on the envied neighbor and that one needed to protect oneself by the use of talismanic protections.

57. *who had never traded in such goods:* Aladdin is still very naive in the ways of the world and will need to learn more about material values if he is to raise his social status.

58. *had renounced the company of other boys:* Aladdin’s evolution as a character is becoming clearer. He now avoids his old playmates and is taking his cues from the merchants in his community.

59. *Aladdin turned to the lamp:* Galland’s story emphasizes the moderation with which Aladdin uses the lamp, but the symbolism of the lamp would be interpreted very differently by Carl Jung, who saw the rubbing of Aladdin’s lamp as an image of masturbation. A similar association appears in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*.

60. *“this merchant is a cheat”:* The suggestion in the story that the Jewish merchant has been treating Aladdin unfairly has been taken by some as evidence of anti-Semitism. If this is true, it is unclear whether it should be attributed to the sources from which the tale is derived or the European reworking of the story for the French translation of the *Nights*. A literary retelling of the tale of “Aladdin” in German, published in 1739 by Johann Leonhard Rost as “A Nice Story

Worth Reading about the Unfathomable Lock in the African Cave of Xaxa," is notable for its anti-Jewish tone (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 78).

61. *continued in this way for many years:* Argentine author César Aira argues that Aladdin is an interloper in the world of magic. He enjoys the gifts of magic not in an "embellished reality" but in the most "dull and commonplace" manner. If magic sets the tale in motion, reality quickly kicks in "to lend matter and meaning to the tale." The reader may well be frustrated that Aladdin abides by the logic of this reality, buying "cheap rice" and stretching the funds gained from each plate. In fact, Aira argues, Aladdin inhabits a world governed by time, just as we do. His example shows how to take full advantage of a gift: "to make time, which is our enemy, work in our favor" ("El Realismo," *Dossier*, my translation).

62. *his silence was to thank for the great riches:* At this point in the story, Galland emphasizes the modesty and discretion with which Aladdin and his mother use the power at their disposal. He seeks to highlight the virtues that explain why Aladdin deserves the power of the lamp.

63. *all shops and houses were to be locked:* The idea that the streets had to be cleared to protect the princess from view reminds Robert Irwin of the report of a seventeenth-century French traveler who claimed that when the Safavid Shah Sulaiman rode out with his harem, all men were banned from the streets of Isfahan on penalty of death. This motif is also present in other *Nights* stories, such as "Qamar al-Zaman and the Jeweller's Wife" ("Afterword").

64. *Through a slit in the door:* Appropriations of this tale in oral storytelling after its publication sometimes alter the setting in which Aladdin first sees his love. In a version of the tale recorded by researchers in 1895 in Ireland's Aran Islands, the princess goes to the beach rather than to a public bath, and the youth hides behind one of the stone walls nearby and removes some of the stones to make a peephole (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 81).

65. *shocked by such a combination of marvels:* Aladdin's sudden infatuation with the princess takes the narrative in a new direction, and this plot is reminiscent of the prince's pursuit of the princess of Bengal in "The Enchanted Horse," another story added by Diyab and Galland.

66. *He ate much less than usual:* In a pattern recognizable from some of the love stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, Aladdin is suffering from lovesickness. This motif appears in classic stories such as "The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur."

67. *"I love the princess with a force I can hardly express":* As in the Baghdadi love stories analyzed by Mia Gerhardt, the love for the beloved is all-consuming, but usually some intermediary is needed to aid the lovers. In his study of the fantastic, Todorov argues that the supernatural is often introduced to transgress social taboos, as the jinni of the lamp serves Aladdin's quest for the hand of the princess. In Hans Christian Andersen's story "The Tinder Box" (1835), which has many similarities to the tale of "Aladdin," the poor soldier must use the magic helpers of his box to transport his princess from her locked tower to his apartment.

68. *"you are the son of one of the lesser tailors of this city":* The mother's realistic assessment of the impossibility of marriage between parties of vastly different social circumstances is reminiscent of the objections of the prince of Persia to marrying his sister to the stranger who arrives from India in "The Enchanted Horse." The existence of social barriers to happiness seems to be a recurrent theme in Diyab's storytelling.

69. *“grant them the justice they seek”:* The added tales of Galland and Diyab have many moments like this in which praise is offered for the good governance of rulers. There seems to be an idealized portrait of monarchy in these stories, reflecting Galland’s closeness to French structures of power.

70. *“do you believe you are worthy”:* The issue of whether Aladdin is truly worthy is again posed. Galland seems to be trying to turn a simple story of social ascension through luck into a meditation on morality and social propriety.

71. *Mother and son were dazzled by their shine:* The motif of dazzling jewels runs through the entire story. The fruits of precious stones epitomize the spirit of “Aladdin” for Mia Gerhardt: “They are dazzlingly beautiful, but hard and uneatable; if [Aladdin] had remained alone with them in the treasure-vault, he would have starved to death. But brought among men, they represent all that the story holds desirable: wealth, royal pomp and splendour, unlimited purchasing capacity” (p. 328).

72. *“I trust that the lamp”:* Aladdin’s lamp is a symbol of possibility, but for some it is a possibility denied. In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie uses “Aladdin” to wrestle with the frustrated aspirations of youth. In his native Mumbai, the young Saladin yearns for the magic lamp that rests next to the gilded tomes of Burton’s edition of the *Thousand and One Nights* in his father’s study, only for his stern father to withhold the lamp as a metaphor for the freedom he is denied. Clarice Lispector remembered reading a stand-alone edition of “Aladdin” in her early childhood; she recalled her early sense that she was unlikely to get what she wanted by wishing, so she would have to create her own opportunities.

73. *Petitioners were called one after the other:* In these passages, Galland seems to be drawing on his experience in foreign courts to give a lesson in political etiquette to his reader.

74. *spoke with great innocence:* While Aladdin seems to be changed by his possession of the lamp, his mother retains her naive and humble disposition. It is not the newfound wealth that has brought maturity to Aladdin, but the magical effects of the lamp.

75. *“women often complain about nothing”:* In this dialogue, Galland invokes stereotypes of women in the same fashion as he does in “The Enchanted Horse” and “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu.”

76. *“Is this gift not worthy of my daughter”:* Despite the magic in this story, some commentators have argued that it displays a strongly materialistic spirit. The protagonist’s journey involves learning about the value of things and what can be bought with the wealth he has gained—including marriage to a princess.

77. *Two months had passed:* The vizier had asked for a three-month delay, but it is possible, as the sultan later implies, that this request was simply meant to gain enough time for Aladdin’s mother to forget his promise.

78. *“I command you to bring me the bride and groom tonight”:* Aladdin has not drawn on the enormous power of the jinni of the lamp for anything but the necessities of life, but with his newfound maturity, he is ready now to wield that power more directly. With this shift, the tale of “Aladdin” seems to depart from European models. Robert Irwin notes that in Straparola’s tales,

the heroes and heroines who benefit from magic typically experience its effects passively, rather than consciously using magic to make things happen. Aladdin, in contrast, begins to make active use of the lamp with the goal of winning the princess (“Afterword”).

79. *transported them:* This supernatural ability to defy the conventional constraints of space and time is one of the great wonders in the story of Aladdin. This motif parallels the mechanical flying horse in “The Enchanted Horse.”

80. *“lock him in the outhouse”:* Robert Irwin notes that an undesirable suitor is also trapped in a privy in “The Tale of Nur al-Din ‘Ali and Shams al-Din,” a story from the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The outhouse scene is often missing in abridged versions of “Aladdin,” which excised any element that might give offense to “the delicate reader.” In *The Oriental Moralist* (1790), the vizier’s son spends his lonely wedding night in a clean stable rather than in a lavatory.

81. *“since your father had promised you to me”:* This careful explanation of Aladdin’s reasons for abducting the princess and her bridegroom suggests the hand of Galland, who often sought to reassure his reader as to the legitimacy of his protagonist’s behavior.

82. *placed a sword between them:* With this gesture, Aladdin seems to prove that he is a gentleman and will treat the princess with due respect. Robert Irwin has identified several European precedents for this element, which might suggest that Galland added it to ensure that propriety was maintained in the scene. In Nordic myth, Tristan and Isolde sleep with a sword between them, as do Sigurd and Brunhilde. It also appears in an Arthurian romance (“Afterword”).

83. *All they perceived was the jolt:* The jinni does his work while remaining invisible. Qur’anic and popular beliefs about the jinn suggested that they usually remained unseen even while they occupied the same domain as human beings. They are blamed for the hauntings that in Western societies would be attributed to ghosts.

84. *Only after he threatened to cut off her head did she speak:* The specter of the tyrant king emerges briefly here, after the storyteller had shown the sultan to be kind and compassionate in his earlier dealings with Aladdin’s mother and his daughter.

85. *“I did not marry you to make you miserable”:* As in the story of “The Enchanted Horse,” the author of the tale includes reflections on the importance of the princess’s desire for happiness in marriage.

86. *“whisked away by unseen hands”:* The jinn were believed to abduct people—especially beautiful men and women—and this is demonstrated in several *Nights* stories, including “The Story of King Shahriyar and His Vizier’s Daughter, Shahrazad” and “The Tale of the Second Dervish.”

87. *he confessed his doubts:* The sultan still resists the idea of a marriage across social barriers. This issue highlighted social tensions around class in nineteenth-century Britain, and the 1826 play by George Soane, *Aladdin: A Fairy Opera*, includes a scene where the Princess Nournahal refers to Aladdin’s humble origins and denounces customs of propriety that would prevent a union with her newly wealthy lover (Orr, p. 127).

88. *“send me forty vessels of solid gold”:* In a Hungarian variant of this tale type published in 1874, the impossible task demanded of the unworthy suitor is the procuring of trees bearing golden apples, pears, and figs. When the youth opens an old lock in a forgotten courtyard, three maidens appear to grant him his wish, leaving the king no choice but to give his daughter to him in marriage (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 74).

89. *“carried by forty black slaves”:* The storyteller is interested not just in the jinni’s ability to produce wealth but also the impact this wealth can have in Aladdin’s world. For Charles Dickens, the story of “Aladdin” provided a template for thinking about the impact of destiny in the complex landscape of the Victorian city. A character such as Dick Swiveller in *The Old Curiosity Shop* seems to benefit from his own mysterious jinni—falling into an *Arabian Nights* dream where marriage to “the Princess of China” is accompanied by the summoning of “slaves with jars of jewels on their heads.”

90. *filled with pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds:* The motif of precious jewels runs through the whole story, and it is striking that a similar list of precious gemstones was used by Diyab in his memoir fifty years after he delivered the story of “Aladdin” to Galland. In his description of a Corpus Christi procession passing through the streets of Paris, he wrote, “As I stared at the [monstrance], I felt as though I were looking at the sun! The sheer number of diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other precious jewels covering it made it so dazzling that you could hardly train your gaze upon it” (*The Book of Travels*, vol. II, p. 39).

91. *the street was full of people:* This is one of a series of public processions in the story, and it may have been suggested by Diyab’s time in Paris, where he was dazzled by the richness of the religious processions that passed through the streets.

92. *the most vivid and precious jewels:* Images of the jinni’s ability to deliver unlimited wealth and prosperity were used in a propaganda campaign supporting the use of nuclear technology created in 1956 by Disney, in cooperation with physicist Heinz Haber. In the book *Our Friend the Atom*, the jinni was used as a symbol of atomic power and credited with the ability to grant humanity three wishes: an almost endless source of energy, a larger food supply to promote global health, and peace. This campaign included animated films depicting jinn towering over the earth in ways that anticipate the genie of Disney’s *Aladdin* (1992).

93. *The mere sight of such riches:* It is wealth that produces results in this story. Beneath the fairy-tale trappings, the tale of Aladdin seems to be rooted in a merchant ethos, and this facilitated its success in European societies increasingly defined by the circulation of wealth.

94. *he emerged a quite different man:* The transformation of the character of Aladdin through the agency of the lamp is given clear physical form in this scene. The evolution of the story’s protagonist into a sophisticated young man worthy of a princess is a result of magical intervention, but it also provides a model of maturation that made sense for readers in many different cultural contexts.

95. *ten thousand gold coins in ten purses:* Aladdin’s material transformation was particularly appealing for nineteenth-century American readers and audiences. As middle-class Americans experienced a steady rise in their prosperity during that period, Aladdin became a useful metaphor for consumer dreams fueled by capitalist expansion (Nance, *How the* Arabian Nights *Inspired the American Dream*).

96. *The streets through which he passed rang with cheers:* This procession is described in great detail, including the gold coins thrown to the crowds. It has generated extravagant representations in the animated and live-action films of *Aladdin* produced by Disney—where it becomes the occasion for adding exotic imagery and elaborate sight gags. The description of this procession in Galland's story may have been influenced by a memory of his time in the Ottoman Empire, where he witnessed the departure of the Grand Seigneur from Adrianopolis (now Edirne) for battle on May 7, 1672. He raved in his diary at the time, "I have never seen anything that even approached the beauty, the splendor, and the surrounding display of his majesty's departure." The sight of the sultan "effaced all of the radiance and splendor of the ranks that had come before him," just as "the planets and the stars are deprived of all of their radiance and brilliance when the sun is there." He combined the "air and apparel of a warrior" with "the brilliance of the big precious stones and pearls shining on him" (Galland, pp. 137–38; translation by Peter Madsen).

97. *it was a property of the lamp:* Richard Burton notes the far-reaching impact of the lamp on the evolution of Aladdin: "the magical effect of the ring and the lamp extend far and wide over the physique and morale of the owner: they turn a 'raw laddie' into a finished courtier, warrior, statesman" (Supp. 3, p. 104, n. 1).

98. *found that Aladdin could speak with knowledge and wisdom:* In the *Nights*, judgments of a character's suitability for integration into the highest echelons of society often involve evaluating their ability to speak intelligently. This scene echoes the value placed on sophistication in manners and speech in the Arab lands in which the story collection was born. A similar scene is included in "The Story of the Jealous Sisters."

99. *"Build me a palace":* The motif of building a palace with the help of a jinni also appears in "Judar and His Brothers" in the *1001 Nights*. Judar, like Aladdin, will go on to marry a princess. The building of Aladdin's palace is another moment in the story when Galland (or Diyab) emphasizes the richness of the materials used in the palaces that appear in these added tales. The details of the architecture have been attributed to Galland, who was familiar with Ottoman palaces from his time in the Middle East, but as I have noted in *Marvellous Thieves*, Aladdin's palace might well be European. Diyab had visited Louis XIV's Versailles before he provided this story to Galland in 1709.

100. *"your palace is complete":* The extraordinary speed with which the palace was completed may reflect Diyab's amazement at the speed with which Versailles had been built. He claims in his memoir that Louis XIV had built it outside Paris because the city's nobles refused to accept his companion, Madame de Maintenon, as a suitable wife for their king. As a result, the French king commissioned a palace "unequaled in any part of the world," with astonishing gardens and promenades (*Book of Travels*, vol. II, pp. 21–23).

101. *stretching from the sultan's gate into the distance:* The palaces are alternatively described as across from each other, or separated from each other by a piece of land or a square (the sultan having to walk or ride to Aladdin's palace). Enchantment can warp geography, as the king learns in "The Enchanted Prince," when a journey of half a day takes six months once the enchantment is lifted. "This sense of uncertain distance, of indeterminacy, adds to the story's enchanted quality," Seale observes. "Just as Aladdin's appearance is magically altered, and known and fixed

things are liable to shift, so too distances might be expected to expand and contract over the course of the story."

102. *"He has shown us that, with enough money, miracles can happen overnight":* In *Household Words*, Dickens used the story of Aladdin to draw a parallel with the sudden wealth produced by industrial enterprises. The marvels of the hidden cave and the powers of the jinn, he suggested, paled before the vast treasure generated by a certain London firm and the sudden appearance of palaces in the suburban outskirts—the product of forces beyond human understanding.

103. *Merchants set about decking their shops:* Once again, the storytellers describe the festive environment in a manner that might reflect the Ottoman capital of Istanbul or eighteenth-century Paris. In his memoir, Hanna Diyab described how, during the feast of Corpus Christi, "people decorate their walls, doors, and shops with their finest fabrics and adornments, and scatter flowers in the streets" (*Book of Travels*, vol. II, p. 39). Ottoman Istanbul, where Galland spent time on diplomatic missions, was well known for the spectacular fireworks—set off from boats on the waters of the Bosphorus—that accompanied gala events.

104. *full of wonder to see her:* Even Aladdin's mother is now partaking of some of the effects of the wondrous lamp, which proves that wealth can transform anyone in a dramatic fashion.

105. *They were followed by the musicians:* The elaborate processions in this story are often interpreted as a product of Galland's time in the Ottoman Empire. The descriptions of masses of pages, eunuchs, musicians, and messengers resemble ceremonies associated with the Ottoman court, especially when combined with the illuminations.

106. *dance out of their own wedding:* This romantic gesture seems to be a nod to European customs rather than an Arab model, and it was probably added to the story by Galland.

107. *screens inlaid with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds:* The excess of Aladdin's palace has been noted by critics like Sylvette Larzul, who suggests that the gold platters and gemstone-encrusted cups, as well as these unique window screens studded with precious stones, were an effort to provide French readers with the astounding wealth that they associated with "Oriental" kingdoms. The exotic settings of the story allowed set designers for theatrical productions to indulge in spectacular designs in an Oriental mode. Marina Warner suggests that designs for these shifting sites of pleasure—gardens, baths, fountains, palaces, and harems—"amount to a kind of shopping catalogue of luxurious taste and amusing and preposterous exoticism" (pp.359–60).

108. *"we lack the materials":* The episode of the unfinished twenty-fourth window seems to function as a reminder of the exceptional quality of the jewels now in the possession of Aladdin—which exceed even the sultan's own fortune. This may be an element suggested by Diyab to show that, after his apprenticeship with Paul Lucas, he understood that precious stones were of varying quality and experts could distinguish among them.

109. *He made sure to be seen by the townspeople:* Aladdin's efforts to be seen in public are an effective method of gaining popularity, as are his displays of generosity. These steps reveal that he has become an astute politician as well as a rich man. The importance of the sultan making himself visible to his subjects as he traveled to the mosque weekly would have been something Galland had observed in the rituals of power in the Ottoman Empire. The spectacle of Aladdin's

generosity, staged in plays like Charles Farley's *Grand Romantic Spectacle* of 1813, was received by audiences as symbolic of the betterment of the lower classes as a whole (Orr, p. 127).

110. *He returned a hero:* Aladdin becomes a hero, despite his lack of merit at the beginning of the story, and the authors emphasize that he now displays the qualities of a military leader, as well as compassion and grace. This idealized hero has had a long life on movie screens.

111. *Being a skilled geomancer:* The magician reads the patterns in the sand to discover the information he is seeking. The suggestion that the evil magician could track down anything (including a boy named Aladdin) using the occult science of divination was a source of particular anxiety for the writer Thomas De Quincey. He found something sinister in the magician's power "of reading in that hasty moment an alphabet of new and infinite symbols" composed of "the pulses of the heart, the motions of the will, the phantoms of the brain" (*Autobiography*, pp. 128–29).

112. *"the wonder of the world":* This is also the language that was used to describe the palace of Versailles, which Diyab had recently visited to be presented to King Louis XIV. His memoir includes a long description of the construction of Versailles and a note that it was "renowned among all the Christian kings" (*Book of Travels*, vol. II, p. 23). This experience may have inspired Diyab's description of Aladdin's palace.

113. *"New lamps for old!":* This image was appropriated by Dickens to criticize aesthetic movements like Pre-Raphaelite painting, which sought to achieve deliberately archaic effects. John Tenniel also used this reference in a famous 1876 cartoon in *Punch*, captioned "New Crowns for Old Ones." The image shows British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli as an Oriental magician offering the Crown of India to Empress Victoria (Watt, p. 203).

114. *who knew nothing of its value:* In this story, the magic ring and the magic lamp are the only two objects for which surface qualities cannot be taken as an indicator of inner value. The Disney film *Aladdin* (1992) tries to counter the excessive stress on materialistic values by suggesting that inner qualities are in fact what count.

115. *"What is your command?":* The jinni of the lamp is neutral and takes no notice of whether the talisman to which it is attached has been obtained honestly or not.

116. *along with the palace and the princess in it:* The flying palace with its captive princess was a particularly popular plot element in theatrical versions of Aladdin's story and prompted the use of imaginative special effects. This plot can be found even in stories that have no other connections with the tale of Aladdin. For instance, in a version recorded in Romania, the villain uses a magic object to transport the hero's castle and wife "to the Arabic lands, where the Arabs are" (Marzolph, *101 Middle Eastern Tales*, p. 81).

117. *"Off with his head!":* The compassionate and confused sultan has suddenly become the vindictive tyrant as the grand vizier's influence increases.

118. *The people, who loved him:* This scene of Aladdin walking to his execution may have been inspired by Diyab's experiences in Paris, where he was fascinated by the spectacle of public executions. His memoir includes a long passage describing the sympathy of the assembled crowd for a handsome young man executed for a theft from his father's business. He writes that the

crowd “wept and wailed as though each of them were losing a beloved son” (*Book of Travels*, vol. II, p. 91). The hostility of the crowd to the sultan’s will might be understood within this context.

119. *grant him forty days:* The number forty reappears frequently in the stories that Diyab gave to Galland. There are forty thieves in the story of Ali Baba, and, in “The Enchanted Horse,” the prince stays with the princess at her house for forty days (although Galland changed this in the published version).

120. *they would not have recognized him:* This is another sign that it was the possession of the lamp that produced the enormous changes in Aladdin. Without it, he returns not only to poverty but to a state of confusion and indecision.

121. *The ring rubbed against the rock:* Once again, Aladdin calls on the jinni of the ring only by mistake, even though he previously understood the way in which jinn had been bound to these two objects.

122. *“He is the most deceitful of men”:* The evil magician plays the role of the usurper of the lamp in this story, but in “The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler,” it is the evil vizier who learns the secret of the ring and steals it. Once in possession of the ring commanding the jinni, he transports both the king and Maʿruf to the desert and declares himself king. Before the evil vizier can claim the princess, however, she gets the ring back and restores order. Like Korda’s *The Thief of Bagdad*, the Disney films of *Aladdin* combine the vizier character and the evil magician to create a simpler narrative—effectively blending the plot of “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp” and “The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler.”

123. *“it is essential that you dissemble”:* Aladdin has finally come up with a plan of his own, but he will need the courage of the princess to accomplish it. In this scheme, the princess plays the part of Marjana in “The Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,” or Zaynab in “The Story of Dalila the Crafty.”

124. *she loved more out of inclination than duty:* The author ensures that the reader knows that the princess truly loves Aladdin, and she becomes another of the female protagonists of the *Nights* who must take action to save the day. This pattern can be seen in “ʻAli Shar and Zumurrud” as well as in “ʻAli Nur al-Din and Maryam the Girdle-girl.”

125. *She chose a golden belt studded with diamonds:* These details once again focus on the precious jewels that are a leitmotif within this story.

126. *“I see that we Maghrebis have much to learn”:* The author draws out this scene with inserted dialogue to prolong the suspense as the princess carries out the plan.

127. *the palace returned to its position:* The idea of an elaborate palace that disappears and reappears in the blink of an eye may have been inspired by the amazing scene changes that Diyab saw at an opera performance in Paris months before he offered the tale of “Aladdin” to Galland. At one point in the performance, all the scenery on the stage disappeared, and then there “appeared a palace as splendid as that of the king of France, complete with towering columns, pavilions, salons, crystal windows, and other beautiful features” (*Book of Travels*, vol. II, p. 61).

128. *"Aladdin, my husband and savior":* Despite this added dialogue, Princess Badr al-Budur was a capable participant in the scheme to save herself and Aladdin from the evil magician. In this respect, she mirrors the princess in "The Tale of Maʿruf the Cobbler," who not only retrieves the stolen ring that commands the jinni but also takes custody of it to ensure that the order of the kingdom is preserved. The recent live-action remake of *Aladdin* (2019) makes the agency of the princess in this story even clearer in a way that accords with popular Arabic stories of ingenious female protagonists.

129. *"Alone, I took the lamp from his cloak":* The dialogue seems to credit Aladdin as the sole hero, instead of acknowledging the role of the princess. Given the way that Galland reworked his notes from other Diyab stories, it is likely that this was his addition. His goals in revising these stories for publication often involved adding explanations for why the protagonist deserved his reward. The morals of the stories are always his.

130. *So it was that Aladdin escaped death:* Many of the versions of the story that enter oral tradition end with the defeat of the evil magician and do not go on to the additional confrontation with the magician's brother. Ulrich Marzolph argues that most narrators felt that the extra episode was redundant and so dropped it in oral retellings (*101 Middle Eastern Tales*, pp. 77–82)..

131. *even more wicked:* The wickedness of the use of magic is attributed to the evil intent of the user rather than the practice itself in the tales of the *Nights*. Geomancy was a widely accepted practice in medieval Arab society, especially in Egypt, which Diyab passed through on his way to Paris with Paul Lucas.

132. *the hermitage of Fatima the holy woman:* "The Hunchback" story cycle in the Arabic core of *One Thousand and One Nights* projected Islamic cities into China while also acknowledging the presence of religious minorities within them. In this story from Diyab and Galland, a similar pattern prevails.

133. *"I only want your clothes":* This scene, in which the magician's brother takes on the appearance of the holy woman, is reminiscent of the ruse of Dalila the Crafty in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. However, the intent of Dalila was to play extravagant tricks that would attract the attention of the caliph, and here the intent is clearly malevolent.

134. *"Come and sit by me":* The invitation offered by the princess to the magician in disguise resembles that offered by Ali Baba to the captain of the robbers when he was disguised as a merchant. This device seems to have been a favorite of Diyab—and indeed his memoir indicates that he was aware of the way in which particular clothing or other elements of disguise might provide access to different worlds.

135. *"If this room had a rukh's egg":* The idea that a home is not complete without a certain miraculous object also appears in "The Story of the Jealous Sisters." It draws upon the world of collecting that Diyab and Galland both knew from their own time acquiring valuable objects for the collections of European monarchs. The reference to the rukh's egg also connects this tale to "Sinbad the Sailor," where the rukh's egg appears in the second and fifth voyages. Borrowing from this final act in "Aladdin," an evil magician's suggestion that a rukh's egg is needed (for a potion) sets in motion the plot of Ray Harryhausen's *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*.

136. *“Must I now bring you my master”:* Aladdin has unknowingly breached the compact between him and the jinni by asking for the rukh’s egg, which somehow contains the master to whom the jinni answers. This is a rare moment in which a jinni bound to a talisman cannot obey the person who possesses the magic object.

137. *Aladdin seized his hand:* In this last scene, Aladdin finally acts decisively, entirely on his own initiative and with his own hand. It is the final evolution of the character toward maturity.

138. *They reigned together for many years:* The story of Aladdin offers a classic fairy tale in which love is fulfilled and the kingdom enjoys peace and prosperity. Salman Rushdie used references to Aladdin and his wonderful lamp to craft a conclusion to *The Satanic Verses* in a chapter entitled “A Wonderful Lamp.” Drawing on the symbolism of the lamp developed earlier in the novel, Rushdie imagines the fairy tale of Saladin’s reconciliation not only with his ailing father but also with the cosmopolitan heritage of his Muslim Indian upbringing.

139. *“a man gripped by the mania of wanting things”:* As he did with some of the other tales taken from Diyab, Galland added a piece of the frame tale featuring Shahrazad and Shahriyar to demonstrate that the story belongs in the collection of the *1001 Nights*. Here he adds a moral to the tale by condemning the magician’s unworthy pursuit of great riches and presenting Aladdin’s rise to enormous power and wealth as moderate and admirable. In his translation of the *Nights*, Richard Burton decried Galland’s determination to add morals to the tales: “This ‘pointing the moral,’ as the reader will observe, belongs to Galland, who had no right to introduce the stale European practice into an Eastern tale” (Supp., vol. 3, p. 265, n. 1).

140. *“risks even losing his crown”:* Galland also ensures that a lesson is provided for Shahriyar by suggesting that unjust rule and rash action in condemning innocents to death will result in the loss of one’s throne. The direct correlation with Shahriyar’s murder of dozens of innocent women is clear.

141. *the pleasure he took from the stories:* Galland sets up a happy ending by indicating that Shahrazad’s strategy of entertaining the king with stories has transformed the king’s view of his bride. He now worries that Shahrazad might run out of stories—forcing him to fulfill his promise to kill her at dawn. In his humorous sequel to this tale (“1002nd Arabian Night”), Mark Twain imagines a series of gender reversals and an entirely different ending. His Shahrazad shows no sign of running out of tales to tell, and the spellbound king continues to listen until he finally expires. At this point, Shahrazad simply orders up another king, and another, and another, as each one succumbs in turn to the power of her prolixity.

THE STORY OF THE JEALOUS SISTERS

The jealous sisters may initiate the plot of this story by cruelly stealing the sultan's children from their mother at birth, but "The Jealous Sisters" is really a classic story of a dangerous quest for a series of magical objects. In this respect, it represents one of the most common story patterns in world folklore, with hundreds of versions recorded from locations in the Middle East, Europe, India, Africa, and America. Analogues of the three siblings' pursuit of the fabulous talking bird, singing tree, and golden water can be found in a number of European variants, including the version published in 1556 by Straparola as "Ancilotto, King of Provino."

It is possible that Hanna Diyab, the Syrian storyteller who first told this version of the story to Galland on May 25, 1709, heard Straparola's tale while he spent time in quarantine in Italy before traveling on to France with his mentor, Paul Lucas. However, Robert Irwin argues that Straparola could just as easily have been reworking oral tales that had entered Europe from the east or the south for his published Italian versions. These strands of a Middle Eastern storytelling tradition involving jealous sisters and a quest for magical objects might well have been brought to Europe a second time in the mind of the young Diyab.

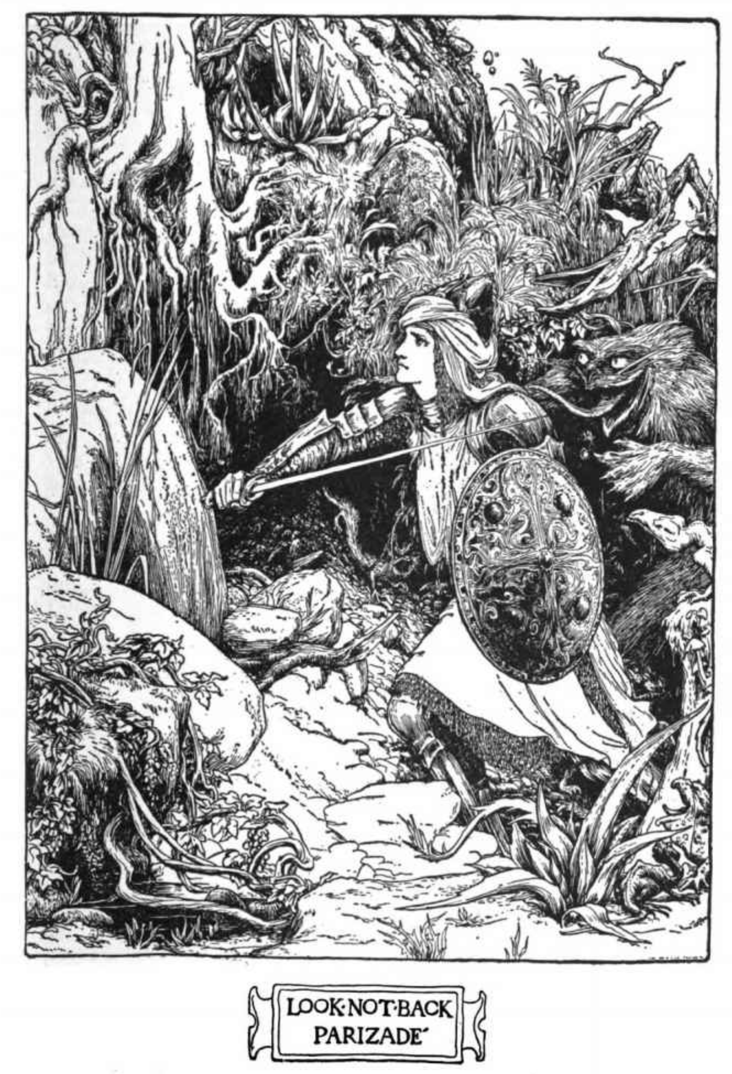


Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights, *ed. Katharine Esther Dixon (1915).*

Whatever the precise origins of the story, its presence in Diyab's repertoire[1] *of stories by the time he reached Paris in 1708 is not surprising. The fabulous objects that are finally acquired by Princess Parizade after her brothers' failed quests do not promise to heal every disease or bring her the power of a jinni, but rather to bring music, beauty, and wisdom into the life of her family. For Diyab, a young man who had spent months traveling with Lucas in pursuit of rare and precious objects, a tale that centered on the acquisition of marvelous objects to ornament a life of grace and ease might have had strong appeal. The logic behind the* *burgeoning collections of rare and curious objects in European capitals—an ethos familiar to both Galland and Diyab—lingers in the tale.*

In this story, Princess Parizade earns her place among all the remarkable female protagonists of the Arabian Nights *through her demonstration of intelligence and courage. Her successful quest for the mysterious objects, in which she also rescues her brothers from the consequences of their mistakes, facilitates a magical reconciliation with her family. By revealing the errors of a vengeful king and preaching the virtues of familial peace, "The Jealous Sisters" also supplied the ending to the* Arabian Nights *that many readers, and perhaps the French translator, believed the stories of Shahrazad deserved.*

SHAHRAZAD, WHO KEPT the question of her own death in suspense by telling stories to the sultan, told him another.

Majesty, there was a prince of Persia[2] named Khosrow Shah, who loved to seek adventures by night. He would often dress as a merchant and wander the streets in the company of one of his officers, also disguised, and he learned of the world in this way. This is the tale of the prince's first outing after the sultan, his father, died and left him the kingdom of Persia.

When his father was buried and the change of power was complete, the new sultan Khosrow Shah stole out of his palace one night with his grand vizier, identities concealed.[3] In a lonely quarter, he heard loud voices and followed the noise to a house, where through a slit in the door he saw light and three sisters in conversation on a sofa. From the eldest, he learned that their subject was wishes.

"Speaking of wishes," she said, "mine would be to marry the sultan's baker, and eat my fill of that fine thing they call sultan's bread. How does your taste compare to mine?"

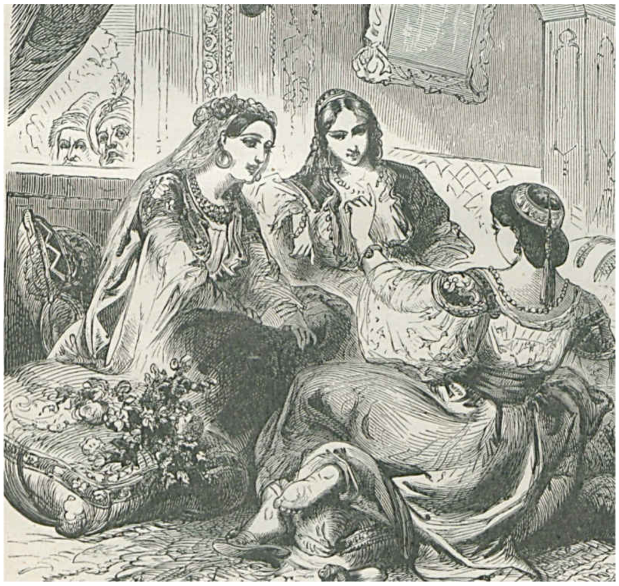
"My wish," said the second sister, "is to marry the sultan's head cook. The stews I would eat! And since there must be sultan's bread throughout the palace, I would have that, too. You see, dear sister, my taste is as good as yours."

The youngest sister, who was very beautiful and had more sense and wit than the others, spoke in turn.

"As for me," she said, "I would not set my desires so low. Since we are only wishing, my wish is to marry the sultan himself and bear him a prince.[4] His hair would be golden on one side and silver on the other, his eyes would weep pearls, and roses would bud between his lips."

The sultan was so taken by their wishes, the last above all, that he resolved to grant them. He had his vizier take note of the house and bring the three sisters to him the next day.

"Do you remember," said the sultan when the women were before him, "what you wished for last night?"



The sultan eavesdrops on the three sisters. Illustration from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

These words, so unexpected, threw the sisters into great confusion. Their eyes fell, and rising pink in the cheeks of the youngest quickened the sultan's heart. As shame kept them silent, he tried to reassure them.

"You have nothing to fear,"[5] he said. "I have not brought you here to upset you. Besides, I know the answer to my question.… You who wished to be my wife will be satisfied today. And you two shall be married to the baker and the cook."

At these words, the youngest sister threw herself at the sultan's feet.

"My wish," she said, "was only idle talk. I am not worthy of the honor, and I beg your pardon for my boldness."

Her sisters tried to make their own excuses, but the sultan cut them off.

"No, no," he said. "Each of your wishes shall be granted."

The three weddings were celebrated on the same day, but with a difference. The youngest sister's party had all the splendor that could be expected of a royal wedding, while the other sisters were married with no more ceremony than was suited to their husbands' rank.

Though all this was as they had wished, and was indeed more than they could dream of, the two older sisters felt the disproportion keenly and fell into a fever of jealousy.[6] It was several days until, alone at the baths, the two had a chance to speak.

“Well,” said the eldest, “what do you make of our younger sister?”

“I cannot think,” said the other, “what the sultan sees in that marmot. Her youth? Hardly a reason. He should have chosen you.”

“This is not about me: I would have happily seen you made sultana. That he chose our skunk of a sister is the trouble. Let us team up and take revenge. This concerns you, too.”

The two sisters met often to discuss how best to hurt their younger sister and came up with many plots, but each presented a difficulty. All the while, they continued to visit her, full of false affection and feigned pleasure at her new station. The sultana, who was not proud, and bore her sisters the same warm feeling as before, never failed to receive them kindly.

Soon after her marriage, the sultana became pregnant, and the news spread joy across the court and through the city. Her sisters begged to be her midwives.

“If the choice were mine,” said the sultana, “I could hardly ask for more, but I must submit to the sultan’s decision. Let your husbands ask their friends to help him make the right one.”

Both husbands petitioned their protectors at the court[7] to obtain for their wives the honor they sought, and their efforts were repaid: The sultan promised to consider it, and he suggested to the sultana that her sisters would be better placed than any others to assist her in labor. The sultana thanked him for his good idea and agreed.

As midwives, the two sisters were at liberty to inflict the harm they wished on the sultana. A prince was born, sweet as day, but his beauty did nothing to soften the pitiless sisters. They swaddled him without much care and stuffed him in a basket, which they abandoned to a stream passing beneath the sultana’s quarters. Then they produced a dead little dog[8] and announced that the sultana had given birth to it. The unpleasant news was delivered to the sultan and sent him into a rage, which might have been fatal to the sultana had his grand vizier not pointed out that she could hardly be blamed for the oddities of nature.

The basket holding the little prince was ferried along the stream[9] through the palace grounds, where the keeper of the sultan's gardens happened to see it. He was amazed to discover a child (beautiful, just born) wrapped in the basket. The gardener, long married, had long wished for children.

He cut short his walk and made straight for his wife's lodgings.

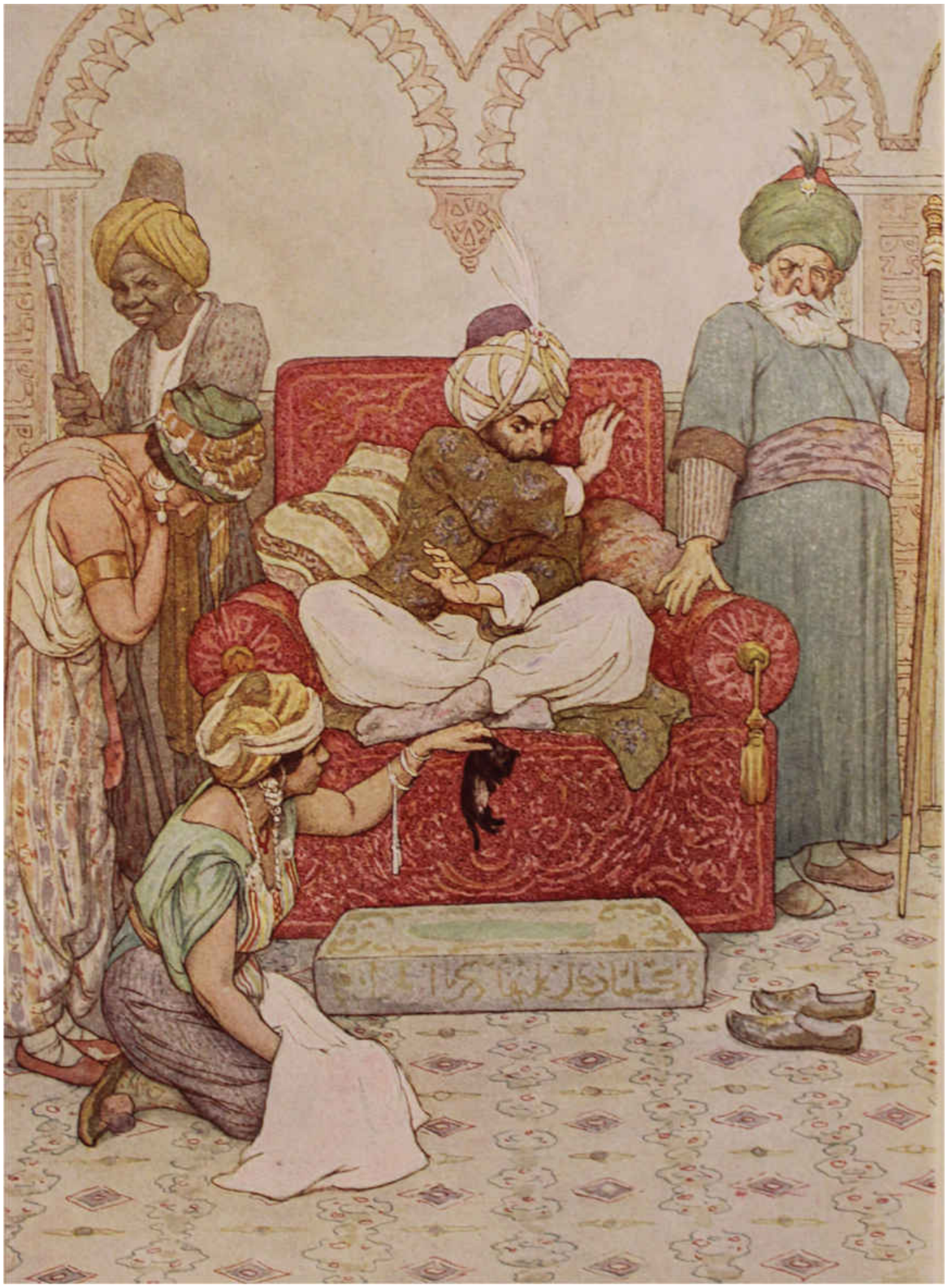
"Here is a child sent to us from heaven," he said. "Call for a wet nurse and treat him as our own."

The woman joyfully took the child and raised him with great care. Where he might have come from[10] was passed over in silence.

A year later, the sultana gave birth to another prince. The unnatural sisters had no more pity for him than for his brother: They abandoned him to the stream in turn and claimed the sultana had been delivered of a cat. It was the child's good luck that the gardener found him, too, fished him out, and carried him to his wife to love as tenderly as the first.

The sultan of Persia was even more affronted by this strange birth than by the first, and he had to be restrained again by his grand vizier.[11]

At last, the sultana went into labor a third time and produced a girl, who met the same fate as her brothers. The two sisters, who had resolved not to rest until they saw their younger sister cast out and degraded, gave the child up to the stream. The princess was saved from certain death by the gardener's mercy and grew up with her brothers.



"The sisters claimed the sultana had been delivered of a cat." Illustration by Fernand Schultz-Wettel from Tusen och en natt *(1921).*

To this crime, the sisters added the same deceit as before: They fetched a piece of timber and made it known the sultana had mothered a plank.[12] This news was too much for the sultan. "To let this woman fill my palace with monsters?[13] I won't allow it. She is a monster herself. I must purge her from the world."

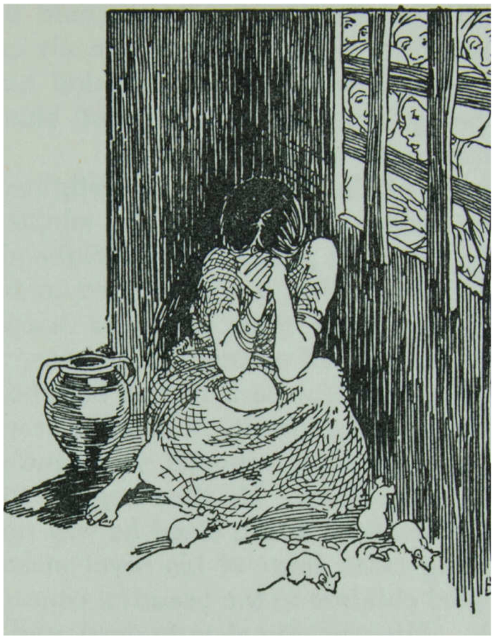
He gave his grand vizier the task of ending her life.

“Forgive me,” said the grand vizier, “but the penalty of death exists to punish crimes. The sultana’s three births, strange as they are, cannot be held against her. Countless other women lose their babies every day. They are to be pitied, not punished.[14] Remove her from your sight, but let her live. The loss of your favor will be agony enough.”

The sultan of Persia looked to his heart and saw the injustice of putting the sultana to death for a miscarriage.

“Let her live, then,” he said, “but on one condition that will make her daily pray for death. Let a wooden box be built at the door of the great mosque, and leave the window open. Lock her up there in coarse clothes and let every Muslim entering the mosque spit in her face as they pass. Those who refuse shall receive the same punishment. You, vizier, will see that I am obeyed.”

With glee, the two sisters saw the box built. The sultana was confined there as soon as she had recovered from the birth, and exposed to the mockery and scorn of passersby, but she bore her humiliation with such dignity[15] that she was quick to win the sympathy of those who saw more clearly than the rest.



The sultana was exposed to the mockery of passersby. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

The princess, meanwhile, was brought up with her brothers by the gardener and his wife, who raised them as their own. With time, signs of beauty and distinction[16] bloomed on the children’s faces. Day by day, their manners grew finer, setting them apart from other children. They were named after ancient kings: the first son Bahman, the second Parviz, and the princess was called Parizade, like many queens before her.

A tutor was appointed to teach the young princes how to read and write. Their sister showed such an interest in their lessons that the gardener, pleased by this inclination, allowed her to join them. Thanks to her quick mind and bold spirit,[17] it was not long before she became as capable as her brothers.

After that, their studies were done together. They were taught fine art, geography and poetry, history and science, even the secret sciences, and they astonished their tutors by mastering all these subjects without difficulty. In spare hours, the princess also learned to play music and sing. When the princes took to horses, she trained with them, and she added riding and archery to her skills.[18] Soon she could throw a javelin as well as her brothers, and sometimes even better.

Thrilled to see his children’s accomplishments return the cost of their education, the gardener made another expenditure on their behalf. He bought a country house some way out of the city, surrounded by arable land as well as woods and meadows. The house, found wanting, was pulled down and rebuilt. Nothing was spared to make it more splendid than its neighbors. The gardener went every day, hastening with his presence the many craftsmen he had put to work. While the house was being furnished, he had a garden made according to his own design, in the manner common to the grandest homes in Persia. To this he added parkland, fenced it with high walls, and filled it with wild animals for the princes and princess to hunt as they pleased.

When the house was ready, the gardener, now weakened by age and his long years of service, begged the sultan to relieve him of his duties. The sultan accepted and asked how he might reward him for his work, but the gardener desired nothing more than the sultan's good grace. He took his leave and retired to the country with his children, his wife having died several years earlier. His own death took him by surprise a few months later, before he had revealed to his children the truth about their birth. They mourned him as the father they believed him to be and continued living together, far from the court.

One day, when Parizade was at home and her brothers were out hunting, an old Muslim woman appeared at the door[19] and begged to be let in, as it was time for her prayer. The princess had her shown into the prayer room, which the keeper of the gardens had taken care to build, there being no mosques in the area. Then she asked that the old woman be brought before her.

Her prayers done, the holy woman was shown around the house and garden, admiring their splendid arrangement and design. The garden she found so skillfully made, so unusual, that she thought it must be the work of a master. At last, she was led into a room more magnificent than any she had seen, where the princess sat waiting for her.

"Good mother," said the princess, "come and sit beside me. I am glad for the chance to speak with a person who has given their life to God, as everyone should, and to learn from your good example."

Rather than climb up to the sofa, the holy woman tried to sit on the step and rose only when the princess insisted. When a low table made of mother-of-pearl and ebony, topped with a porcelain bowl, was spread with cakes, fruits of the season, and dry and liquid jams, the princess invited her guest to eat.

"My lady," said the holy woman, "I am not used to such delicate foods. If I accept, it is only out of gratitude for what God has provided through your hand."

While they were eating, the princess made inquiries about her holy practice, which she answered with great modesty. Then, as their talk drifted, the princess asked her what she made of the house.

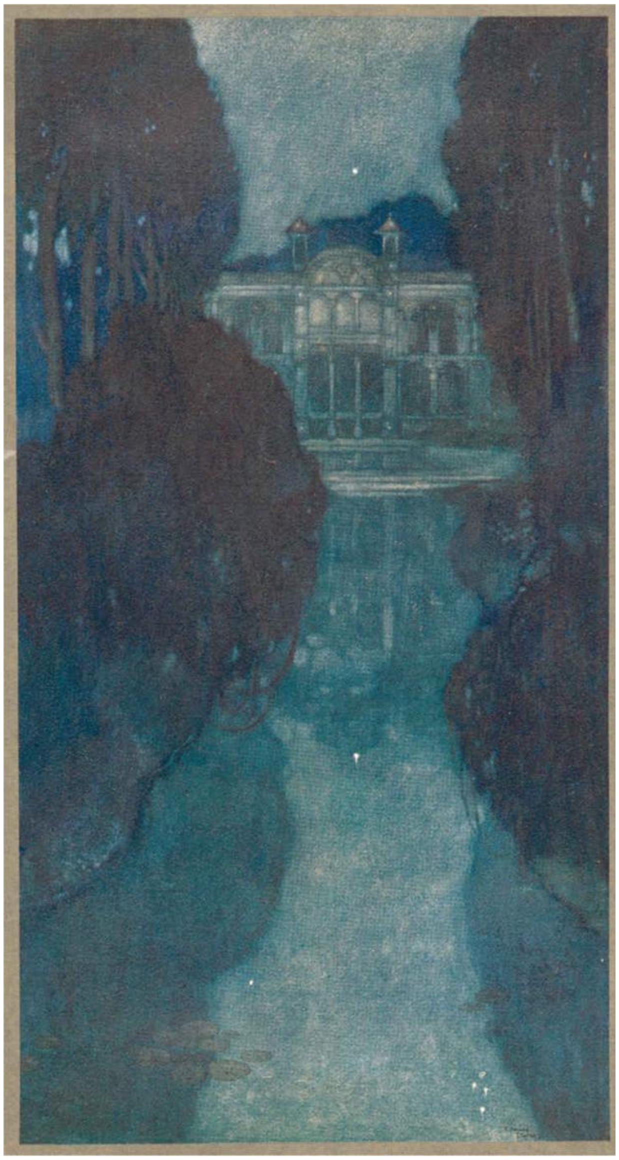


Illustration by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907).*

“It would be in very poor taste,” said the old woman, “to find any fault with it. It is beautiful, bright, splendidly furnished, and a lovelier garden is hard to imagine. But since you ask, I believe it lacks three things to raise it above all others.”

“What are they?” asked the princess. “I shall spare nothing to have them.”

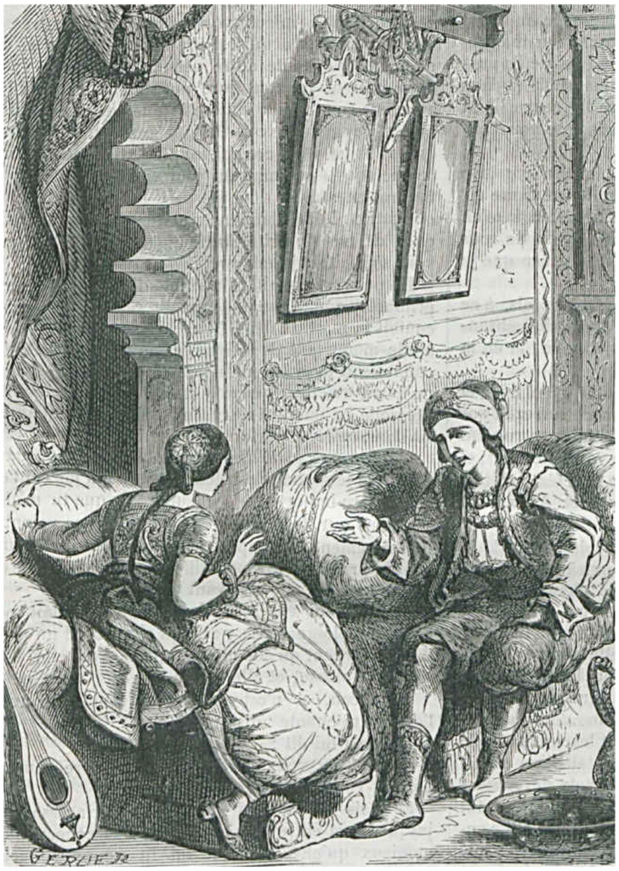
"The first," said the old woman, "is the talking bird, known as Bulbul Hezar,[20] whose song draws out the song of other birds. The second is the singing tree, whose leaves are mouths that make sweet music in different voices and are never still. The third is the golden water, of which only a single drop is needed to create a fountain, rising and falling from a basin without ever spilling."

"Good mother," said the princess, "how can I thank you for telling me of such things! They are surprising, the strangest in the world. You must know where they are: Would you tell me how to find them?"

"I would be ungrateful," said the holy woman, "if I kept this knowledge to myself. The three things I have described are at the far edge of this kingdom, toward India. The road that leads there passes in front of your house. You have only to follow it for twenty days, then ask the first person you meet for the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water."

The princess fixed her mind on these words, fearful of forgetting them,[21] and when she looked up, the old woman was gone. She searched her memory for the directions she had been given, and when she was sure that nothing had escaped, she let herself dream of the pleasure that would be hers were she to succeed in obtaining such marvels. But the difficulty in reaching them, and the fear that she would fail, worried her mind. The princes returned from the hunt to find their sister not cheerful and open as usual, but instead lost in anxious contemplation.

"Are you unwell?" asked Prince Bahman. "Have you been harmed? Tell us all, that we may share your pain, and let us find the cure or take revenge."



She explained that the house lacked three things. Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

Princess Parizade remained silent. At length, she raised her eyes and said that there was nothing wrong.

“But sister,” said the prince, “you have changed so much while we have been away. There must be something. Unless you wish to break the bonds that have held us together since childhood, tell us the truth.”

The thought of clashing with her brothers broke her silence.

“When I said nothing,” said the princess, “I meant nothing that concerns you, though it is of some concern to me. You believed as I did that this house our father built was perfect, but today I learned of three things that would place it beyond compare. These are the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water.”

After explaining their qualities, she said a holy woman had told her where to find them and that she would not be content until she saw them in their house. Parizade asked for her brothers’ help.

"Dear sister," said Prince Bahman, "your concerns are ours, and you have only to say you want these things for us to want them too. As it happens, I am drawn to them myself. Tell me where they are and how to get there, and I shall fly to them."

"Dear brother," said Prince Parviz, "it would not be right for you, the head of this house, to leave it for so long. Let me go."

"Brother," said Bahman, "I am sure of your good will, and that you would fare as well as I. But my mind is made up: I want to go, and I will."

He spent the rest of the day preparing to travel and committing the path to memory.

In the morning, Bahman mounted his horse. Parviz and Parizade kissed their brother and wished him a safe journey. But as they said good-bye, a thought occurred to the princess.

"Travel is full of danger," she said. "Who knows if I shall ever see you again? Come down from your horse. I would rather live without the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water, than to risk losing you."

"Sister," said the prince, smiling at her sudden fear, "danger is for the unlucky. I may be one of those, but I may just as well be one of the lucky,[22] who are greater in number. As nothing is certain and failure is possible, I leave you with this knife. Pull it from its sheath from time to time. As long as you find it clear, you can be sure I am alive and well. But if it bleeds, you will know that I have died."

Leaving the knife with his sister, Prince Bahman said good-bye for the last time and set off on the path all the way across Persia.

On the twentieth day, he saw on the edge of the path a withered old man sitting under a tree by a hut. Snowy hairs covered his brow and chin, and snowy locks fell down his back to his feet. The nails on his fingers and toes were extremely long. A hat in the shape of a parasol,[23] flat and wide, covered his head. He wore a kind of mat wrapped around his frame, nothing else.

This old man was a dervish, who had left the world long before and had forgotten himself to serve God alone. Prince Bahman stopped, dismounted, and drew near.

"God lengthen your days," he said, "and grant you all you desire!"

The dervish returned his greeting, but the words were lost in his beard. Prince Bahman, who needed directions, took from his bags a pair of scissors and tied his horse to a branch of the tree.

“Dervish,” he said, “I want to talk to you, but your beard is in the way. Let me trim it and those eyebrows of yours that make you look more bear than man.”

The dervish did not resist. When it was done, the prince saw that his skin was clear, and that he seemed much younger than he was.

“If I had a mirror,” said the prince, “I would show you how refreshed you look. Now you are a man; before, it was impossible to say what you were.”

Prince Bahman’s care drew a smile from the dervish.

“Whoever you are,” the dervish said, “I am obliged to you for your good deed, and I am ready to return the favor. Tell me what you need, and I will try to help.”[24]

“I have come from far,” said the prince, “in search of the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water. I know they are near but no more. If you know, please tell me the way.”

As he spoke, the prince noticed that the dervish’s face changed: His eyes fell, he grew serious and said nothing.

“Good man,” the prince went on, “if you heard me, please tell me if you know or not. Let me not waste any time.”

At last the dervish spoke.

“I know the path you seek,” he said, “but I have grown fond of you and am wary of revealing it.”

“Why do you hesitate?” asked the prince.

“The danger you are courting,” said the dervish, “is greater than you think. Many other lords, as brave and as bold as you, have come this way with the same question. They were not put off by my warning and begged me to show them the path. They all failed, and not one of them returned. If life is dear to you, take my advice: Go no farther.”

Prince Bahman persisted.

“I believe you are sincere,” he said, “but no danger can change my mind. There is no attacker more skilled than I or braver, and I am well armed.”

"And if your attackers (for they are many) cannot be seen," said the dervish, "how will you defend yourself against invisible people?"[25]

"No matter," said the prince. "Nothing you will say can sway me from my duty. I beg you once again: Show me the way."

When the dervish saw the prince would not be moved, he fished a ball from the bag beside him[26] and handed it to Bahman.

"Since you will not listen," he said, "take this ball, throw it before you as you ride, and follow it to where it stops at the foot of a mountain. Leave your horse (she will wait until you return) and start to climb. To the left and right you will see piles of black stones and you will hear a confusion of voices from all sides, who will curse you to stop you from going ahead, but do not be afraid. Above all, do not turn to look behind you, or you will be changed to a black stone[27] like the others on your path, who were all noblemen like you. On the peak, you will find a cage, and in the cage the bird you seek. Ask it where the singing tree and the golden water are, and, being a talking bird, it will tell you. You would do well to change your mind. There is still time."

"Grateful as I am for your advice," said the prince, "I cannot take it. But I will heed your warning and will not look behind me as I climb. Soon, I hope, you will see me return with my spoils and thank you properly."

Back on his horse, the prince threw the ball ahead of him. It flew along at equal speed until it reached the mountain. Bahman stepped off his horse and, spotting the black stones, began to climb. Four steps in, he heard the disembodied voices that the dervish had described.

"Where is he going?" said some. "What does he want? Don't let him pass."

"Stop him," said others. "Take him, kill him."

"Thief!" cried others. "Murderer!"

Other voices teased.

"No," they said. "Don't hurt him. Let the darling boy pass. Is it not for him that we keep the talking bird?"

Prince Bahman pressed on up the slope, but the voices rose to such a babble, so loud and close around him, that he was afraid. His legs gave out, he stumbled, and, feeling his strength desert him, he forgot the dervish's words. He turned to run back down. In a moment, he became a black stone, along with his horse, a metamorphosis many had suffered before him.

Many times a day since her brother had set out on his journey, Princess Parizade had slipped the knife he gave her from its sheath and consoled herself that he was well. One night, as she and Parviz fell to talking about their brother, as was their custom, he said, “Pull out the knife, and let us see his news.”

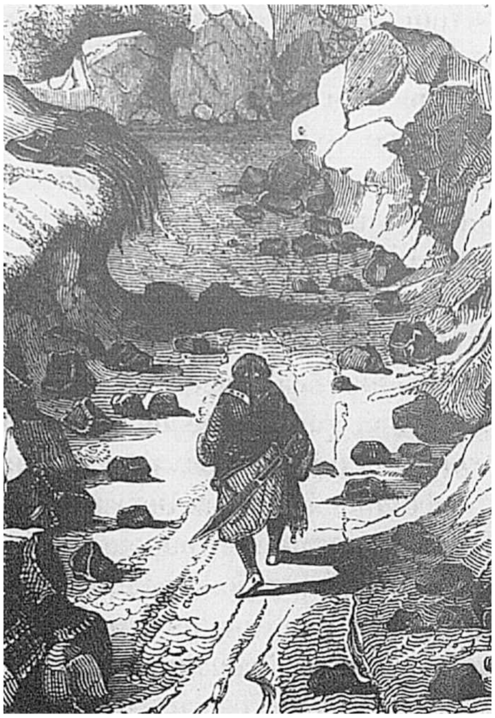
The princess drew it out and saw that blood was dripping from its point. In horror, she tossed the knife away.

“Ah, dear brother!” she cried. “So I have lost you,[28] and by my own fault! Why did I ever tell you of the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water? What did it matter that the holy woman found this house perfect or not? If only she had never said a word, the liar! Why did she tell me of a bird, a tree, a water that cannot exist yet still prey on my mind?”

Prince Parviz was no less broken by the news of their brother’s death, but he wasted no time on regrets. From his sister’s words, he understood that she still longed for the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water, and he cut her off.

“Our tears,” he said, “will not bring back our brother. His death is God’s design.[29] We must accept it. But why do you now doubt the holy woman’s words, having so firmly believed them to be true? Do you suppose she would have told you of these things if they did not exist, that she invented them just to trick you, you who welcomed her so warmly? Rather, we must assume that our brother died by her fault, or by some accident we cannot know. Let his death not stand in the way of our quest. My offer to make the journey in his place still stands; I shall go tomorrow.”

His sister, afraid of losing another brother, did all she could to dissuade Prince Parviz. He would not be swayed. Before leaving, he gave his sister a rosary strung with a hundred pearls.



Bahman began to climb. Illustration from Les Mille et une Nuits: Contes Arabes*, translated by Antoine Galland (1840).*

“Hold this rosary while I am gone,” he said, “and if the beads no longer flow between your fingers, you will know I met the same fate as our brother.”

Prince Parviz set off, and, on the twentieth day, he met the same dervish in the same place. He came near, greeted him, and asked where the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water could be found. The dervish gave him the same warning that he had given Prince Bahman, saying that it was not long before that a young horseman much like himself had asked him the way and not returned.

“Good dervish,” said the prince, “he was my older brother and I believe he is dead, but how he died I cannot say.”

“I can tell you,” said the dervish. “He was changed to a black stone, and you will meet the same fate unless you follow my advice more carefully than he did. I must ask you again, however, to reconsider.”

“Dervish,” said the prince, “touched as I am by your concern to save a stranger’s life, I cannot give up. Please, do me the kindness you showed my brother; perhaps I shall fare better.”

“Since I cannot change your mind,” the dervish said, “if I were not so old and able to stand up, I would bring you the ball I have here, which will be your guide.”

Prince Parviz got off his horse and approached the dervish just as he lifted the ball from his bag, where there were many more. He told the prince how to use it, and, having warned him not to let himself be startled by the disembodied voices, but to press on until he found the talking bird, he sent the prince away.

Prince Parviz thanked the dervish and, back on the road, flung the ball ahead of his horse. At the point where it stopped, he dismounted. Before starting the climb, he stood still for a few moments, recalling what the dervish had advised. Then he took five or six steps up the mountain. A voice rang out very near, as if a man was calling him.

“Too bold! You will be punished!”

At this insult, the prince forgot the dervish’s words, and, drawing his saber, turned to take revenge.[30] He had barely noticed that nobody was there when he was changed to a stone, along with his horse.

Every day since Parviz had left, Princess Parizade would take out the rosary in idle moments and let the pearls run through her fingers. At night, she would slip it around her neck and her hand would fly to it upon waking. One day, she felt the pearls no longer obeyed the movement of her fingers and knew Parviz had met his end.

Having already decided what to do if this occurred, she lost no time displaying signs of grief. The next day, dressed as a man,[31] she told her staff she would return in a few days and set out on the path on horseback. Years of hunting for sport made the journey less arduous than it might have been for others, and she covered the same distance as her brothers in as many days. On the twentieth day, she met the dervish and went to sit by him.

“Good dervish,” she said, “allow me to rest beside you, and to ask if you know of the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water, and where they might be found.”

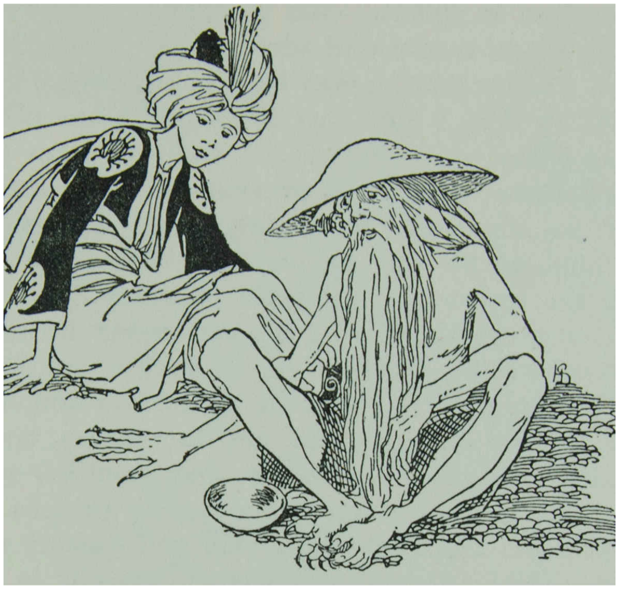
“My lady,” he said, “since I can tell your sex by your voice despite your disguise, your presence is a pleasure and an honor. I know where these things are to be found, but why do you ask?”

“Since they were described to me,” said the princess, “I burn to have them.”

“These things,” he said, “are even greater marvels than you have heard. But you were not told how difficult it is to obtain them, and you would not have embarked on this quest had you been properly informed. Go no farther: Do not ask me to send you to your doom.”

“I have come so far,” said the princess, “that it would be a sad thing to turn back now. How difficult can it be?”

The dervish repeated to her what he had told her brothers, exaggerating the dangers along the way. He told her that the talking bird was on the peak, and it alone would lead her to the singing tree and to the golden water, and that the mountain thronged with terrifying voices, and that the path was strewn with black stones, which were all brave horsemen who had failed to heed the warning he had given them: not to turn around before they reached the top.



Parizade meets the dervish. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

“If I understand you well,” the princess said, “this journey has two difficulties. One is to climb up to the talking bird without being alarmed by all the disembodied voices; the other is to reach the top without turning around. I hope I have enough mastery over myself to meet the second condition. As for the first, I admit that the voices you describe would frighten even the boldest, but tell me, is it not permitted to use our wits?”

“Wits?” said the dervish.

“It seems to me,” said the princess, “that if I stuff my ears with cotton,[32] loud and frightening voices would be dulled and would not prey so fiercely on my mind.”

“Of those who have come this way,” said the dervish, “not one has proposed it. You may try, but I must advise you not to take the risk.”

“My heart tells me this trick will see me through. I beg a final favor: Show me the path to take.”

One last time, the dervish urged her to turn back, and when she stood firm, he pulled out a ball.

“Take this ball,” he said, “get on your horse, throw it ahead of you, and follow all its turns until you reach the mountain. There it will stop. There you will dismount and start the climb. You know the rest. Do not forget what I have told you.”

The princess, having thanked the dervish, got back on her horse and flung the ball ahead. She followed it to the foot of the mountain, stepped off, stuffed her ears with cotton, and, after examining the path that would lead her to the top, boldly began the climb. She heard voices, but, thanks to the cotton, they were never loud enough to trouble her. There were many insults and stinging remarks about her sex,[33] which she brushed off with a laugh.

“Your threats and teases cannot touch me,” she thought. “Do your worst! You will not stand in my way.”

She pressed on faster and reached the top, and when the land was flat, she saw the bird in its cage. It, too, tried to scare her away.

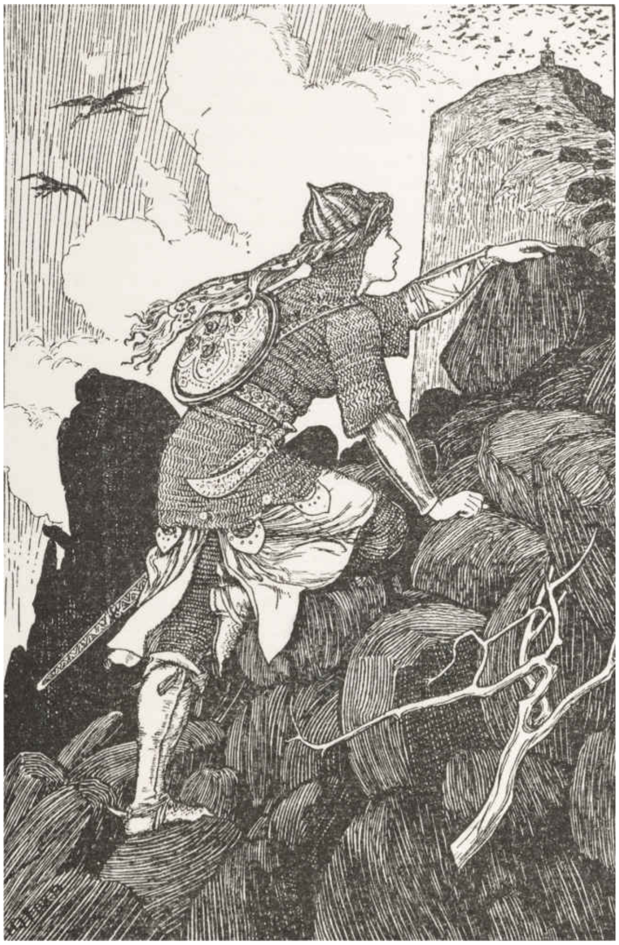
“Stand back!” it cried. “Come no closer!”

The princess quickened her pace and laid hold of the cage.

“I have you,” she said, “and you will not escape!”

Then she removed the cotton from her ears.

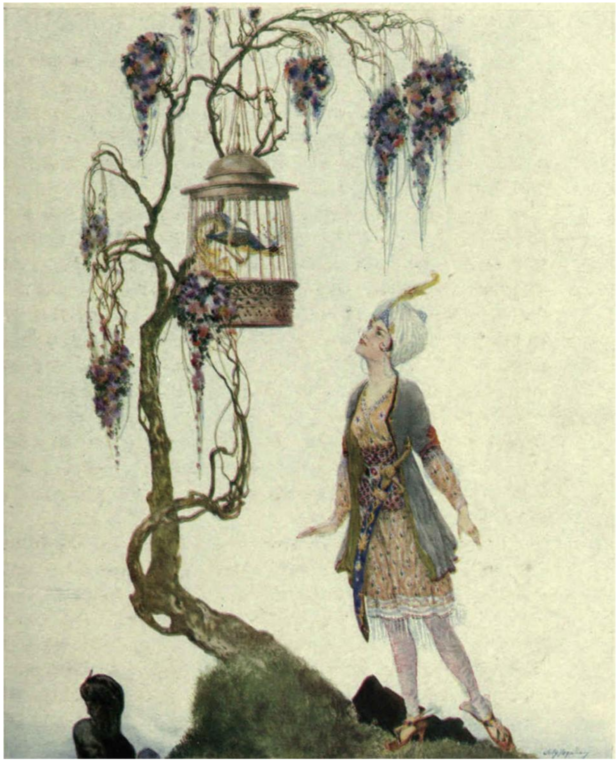
“Since I must be somebody’s slave,” said the bird, “I would rather it be such a brave person as you[34] than anyone else on earth. I pledge to you my loyalty and submit to your command. I know you better than you know yourself, and one day I shall do you a favor for which you will have cause to thank me. First, tell me what you wish for: I am ready to obey."



"Parizade boldly began the climb." Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

The princess could not express her joy. This triumph had come at the cost of two beloved brothers, and her own peril and exhaustion.

"There are several things I wish for," she said. "First, I have heard that there is a golden water with marvelous properties. I beg you to tell me where it is."



“I pledge to you my loyalty,” said the bird. Illustration by Willy Pogány from Edward Lane’s More Tales from the Arabian Nights, *ed. Frances Jenkins Olcott (1915).*

The bird told her where to find the source, which was not far away, and she filled a silver vial that she had brought with her. Then she returned to the bird.

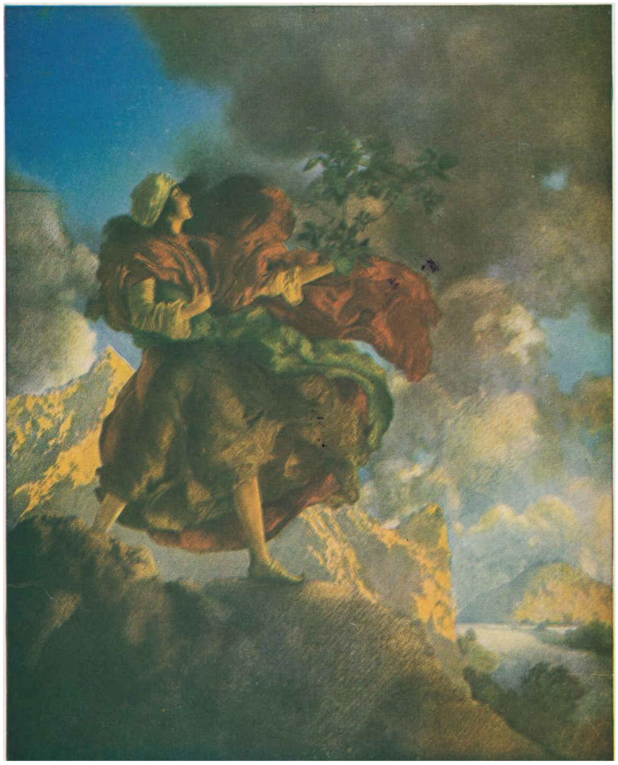
“Bird,” she said again, “that is not all. I also wish to find the singing tree.”

“Turn around,” said the bird. “The tree is in that wood.”

The wood was not far off. A concert of birdsong led her to the tree she sought. But it was tall, its trunk too wide to move. She went back to the bird.

“Bird,” she said, “I found the singing tree, but I cannot uproot it.”

“There is no need,” said the bird, “to pull it up. Simply take the smallest of its branches and plant it in your garden. Soon it will grow into a tree as fine as the one you have seen.”



Parizade broke off a small branch from the singing tree. Illustration by Maxfield Parrish (1909). The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library.

When Princess Parizade had the three things she had come so far to get, she said to the bird, “What you have done for me is not enough: You brought about the deaths of my two brothers, who must be among the black stones I saw on the way. Let me bring them home with me.”

The bird appeared to hesitate …

* * *

But morning gained on Shahrazad and cut her speaking short.

“The strangest story!” said her sister.

“If I live another night,” she said, “I shall tell you stranger.”

The king decided he would spare her till the story’s end and kill her the next day.

When night fell, her sister said, “If you are not asleep, tell us a tale to break the waking night.”

And Shahrazad agreed.

"Bird," the princess said. "Remember that you pledged to me your service. Your life is in my hands."

"I cannot deny it," said the bird. "This request of yours is harder, but I will fulfill it. Look around: Do you see a pitcher?"

"I see it," said the princess.

"Take it, pour some of its water on each black stone,[35] and you will find your brothers."

Princess Parizade took the pitcher, the bird in its cage, the vial, and the branch, and on her way down, she watered the black stones.[36] Each one changed to a man, and some to horses. Soon she recognized Bahman and Parviz, who came to embrace her.

"Dear brothers," she said. "What are you doing here?"

They told her they had been sleeping.

"Yes," she said, "but without my help, you would have slept until the day of judgment. Do you not remember that you had come to find the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water, and that you saw the path strewn with black stones? Look, and see if there are any left. You, the noblemen around us, and their horses were these stones. I changed you back to men, thanks to this pitcher, having tamed the talking bird, which led me to the singing tree (here is one of its branches), and the golden water (this vial is full of it). As I could not go home without you, I compelled the bird to show me how to bring you back to life."

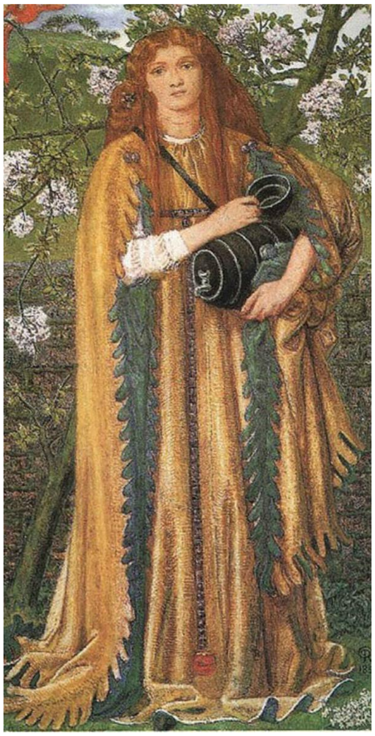
The princes recognized the debt they owed their sister, and the lords waking and gathering around them did the same. Far from coveting what she had conquered, they thanked her for returning them to life and declared themselves her slaves.

"My lords," the princess said, "I wished only to revive my brothers, and I have nothing to ask of you. You are as free as you were before your transformation. Since nothing keeps us here, let us each return to our country."

Princess Parizade found her horse where she had left it. As she prepared to mount it, her brother Bahman asked if he could relieve her of the birdcage.

"Brother," said the princess, "this bird is my slave. I wish to carry it myself. But if you would take charge of the branch from the singing tree, here it is.”

To Parviz she gave the vial of golden water. When the princes and the noblemen had mounted their horses, Princess Parizade waited for one of them to move and lead them off.

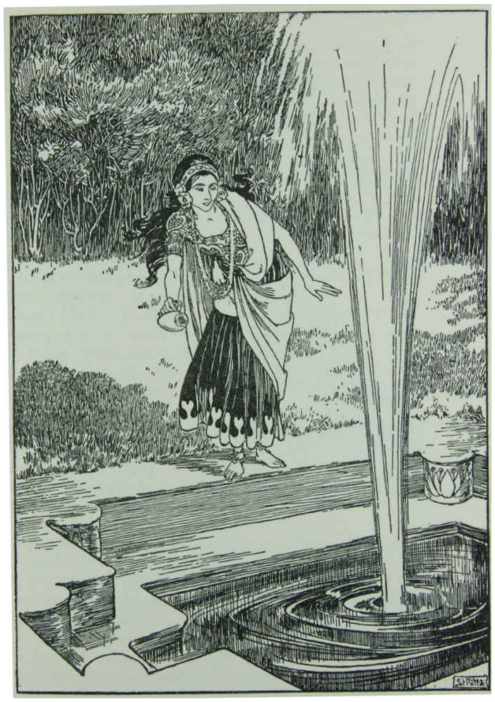


Parizade with her pitcher. Golden Water *(1858), by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti paints Parizade with the vibrancy and romantic grace characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, in contrast to the more active heroic poses favored by book illustrators.*

“My lady,” said one of the noblemen, “after what you have done for us, we beg you to let us have the honor of riding in your wake.”

She set off, and the princes and the noblemen followed her as one. On the way back, they looked for the dervish to thank him for his good advice, but he had died.[37] Whether this was because he was old, or because his directions were no longer needed now that the princess had prevailed, they could not say.

Day by day, their company thinned as the lords who rode with them went their own ways. At home, the princess set the cage in the garden, and when the bird gave voice, nightingales and finches, larks and warblers, and a multitude of others joined in song. She planted the branch on a stretch of grass by the house, and soon it grew into a great tree whose leaves emitted tunes as lovely as its mother’s. Then she had a marble basin set in the grass and emptied into it the vial of golden water, which began to swell and surge, and when it met the basin’s edge, it spurted skyward and came down in even falls without spilling a drop.



The golden water began to swell and surge. Illustration by Helen Stratton from The Arabian Nights *(1912).*

News of these marvels spread, and since the garden gates were closed to none, many came to admire them.

A few days later, recovered from their journey, Bahman and Parviz took up their old ways. As hunting was their usual entertainment, they mounted their horses and rode out beyond the grounds of their home, to a spot that the sultan of Persia[38] also happened to have chosen for his hunt. At the sight of his horsemen, they withdrew, but the path they took on their way out was the one by which he had entered the park, and they could not help but meet him as he passed. They threw themselves down before him, brow to earth. But the sultan, seeing that they were dressed as finely as his own court, was curious to see their faces. He stopped and ordered them to rise.

The princes stood before the sultan, courteous and cool. The sultan considered them from head to toe in silence, admiring their bright faces and easy manner, and then he asked them who they were and where they lived.

"Majesty," said Bahman, "we are the sons of the late keeper of your gardens, and we live in a house he had built for us not long before his death, to be our lodgings until we were old enough to enter Your Majesty's service."

"You seem to like hunting," said the sultan.

"It is our sport," said Bahman, "a skill no subject destined to bear arms for Your Majesty can afford to neglect."

Charmed by the wisdom of his answer, the sultan invited them to hunt with him. They had not gone very far when they saw several animals appear at once. Bahman chose a lion, Parviz a bear, and they charged on their prey with a daring[39] that took the sultan by surprise. Their spears went through the creatures, which fell to earth one after the other. Like a shot, Bahman pursued another bear, Parviz another lion, and soon they pierced and overthrew them, lifeless. They wanted to go on, but the sultan called them back.

"If I let you," he said, "you will soon have taken all my game. But it is not so much the game I wish to spare as your lives, which are dear to me now that I have seen your courage."

By now, the sultan was so taken by the princes that he invited them to follow him to his palace.

"Majesty," said Bahman, "this is an honor we do not deserve. We beg to be excused."

The sultan could not understand their reasons for refusing, and he pressed them to explain.

"We have a younger sister," said Bahman, "who is so dear to us that we do nothing without consulting her."

"Your bond is admirable," the sultan said. "Consult your sister, then, and hunt with me again tomorrow. I shall expect your answer."

The princes returned home, but neither remembered to tell their sister of their encounter at the hunt. The next day, when the sultan asked again, the princes looked at each other with red faces and told him they had forgotten. The sultan granted them another day, but they were forgetful again. Rather than take offense at their neglect, the sultan pulled out of a pouch three little golden balls,[40] gave them to Bahman, and said their tinkling would remind them of their task.

As Bahman prepared for bed that night, the golden balls fell from his belt and put him in mind of the sultan. With his brother, he went to find Princess Parizade, who was not yet asleep, and they told her what had happened on their hunt.

The princess was alarmed.

“Your encounter with the sultan,” she said, “is happy news for you but not for me.[41] You were right to judge that, had you followed him, you would have been forced to abandon me and give yourselves to him entirely. But do you think it easy to turn down a sultan? It is dangerous to resist what our rulers desire. If I were to talk you out of going, my heart’s wish, I would only expose you to his anger. Let us consult the talking bird: It is very discerning and has promised it would see us out of trouble.”

Parizade had the cage brought and asked the bird what they should do.

“Your brothers,” said the bird, “must bend to the sultan’s will, and they must invite him in turn to visit your house.”

“Will our love not suffer?”

“It will be stronger.”

“But the sultan will see me,” said the princess.

“It must be so,” said the bird.

Bahman and Parviz went hunting the next day and told the sultan they had obtained their sister’s consent, and that they were ready to obey him.

The sultan, breaking his habit, did not hunt for long that day. He judged that the princes were no less spirited than they were brave,[42] and he longed to be alone to talk with them. On the way back, he insisted they ride by his side, drawing the envy of the courtiers and the grand vizier.

When the sultan entered his capital, all eyes were fixed on Bahman and Parviz, all minds on who they were and whether they were strangers.

“They are old enough to be our princes,” went the whispers, “had the sultana only been luckier.”

After the sultan had shown the princes around the rooms of the palace, which they admired without pretension and with the air of those who know, a feast was served. The sultan had them sit beside him at the table, an honor they could not refuse.

The sultan, who had an excellent mind and had made great strides in history and science, knew that the princes were too modest to lead the conversation. To put them at ease, he steered their talk throughout the meal, but on every subject he chose,[43] they spoke with such knowledge, wit, and wisdom that he was amazed.

“Had they been my own children,” he thought, “and had I educated them, they could not be more learned or more skilled.”

He took such pleasure in their company that he stayed at the table much longer than was usual, and they continued talking in his study until late.

“I had never dreamed,” the sultan said at last, “that there existed such fine and able young lords among my subjects. No company has brought me more delight than yours in all my life. But we have talked enough; it is time for you to rest your minds with music.” They were joined by singers and musicians, then by brilliant jesters, and male and female dancers closed the evening’s entertainment. The two princes, seeing the night come on, thanked the sultan for his many gifts and begged his leave to depart.

“You may go,” he said, “but remember that I brought you here to show you the way, so you may return yourselves. You are always welcome.”

“Do we dare,” said Bahman, “take the liberty of returning Your Majesty’s invitation? Would you do us the honor, next time the hunt brings you near, of visiting our sister and us at home?”

“Your home,” said the sultan, “can only be beautiful and worthy of you. I will come with pleasure. Early on the day after tomorrow, I shall be at the spot where I first met you. Meet me there and guide me to your house.”

At home, the princes told their sister what they had arranged.

“We must turn our minds at once,” said the princess, “to a meal that might be worthy of his taste. Perhaps the talking bird will have ideas.…”[44]

When her brothers had retired, she put her question to the creature in its cage.

“Bird,” she said, “the sultan will do us the honor of coming to see our home. We must regale him with a feast. Tell us what would make him happy.”

“My lady,” said the bird, “you have excellent cooks. Let them do their best, but let them not fail to make a dish of cucumbers stuffed with pearls and serve it as a first course to the sultan.”

“Cucumbers stuffed with pearls!” cried Parizade. “A monster of a dish. The sultan will be here to eat, not to goggle gems. Besides, no quantity of pearls I might be able to obtain would be sufficient for the stuffing.”

“You must do as I say,” said the bird, “and not worry. Only good will come of it. As for pearls, go tomorrow morning to the first tree in your garden and dig around the roots:[45] You will find there more pearls than you need.”

That night, the princess alerted one of her gardeners that she would need him in the morning, and when it was light, she led him to the tree and had him move the earth around the trunk. The gardener had dug to a certain point when he met some resistance, and soon he discovered a chest of gold about a foot square.

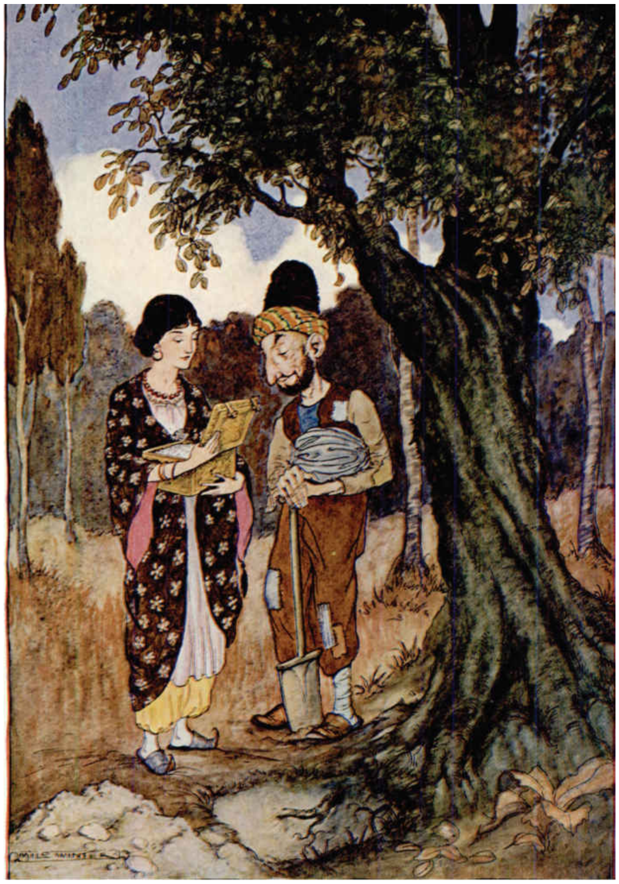
“Take care,” said the princess, “not to spoil it with the spade.”

The gardener hauled the chest out of the earth and gave it to the princess, who opened it with ease and found that it was full of pearls of small and equal size, just right for the use she intended. Delighted with her treasure, she carried it back to the house and left the gardener to fill the hollow he had made.

Bahman and Parviz, who had seen their sister in the garden earlier than usual, dressed and went to meet her.

“Sister,” said Prince Bahman, “what is that golden chest? Some treasure the gardener found?”

“On the contrary,” the princess said. “I led the gardener to it.”



The gardener discovered a chest of gold. Illustration by Milo Winter from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1914).*

She dazzled them by opening the chest, which they saw was filled with tiny, precious pearls. Together they puzzled over the bird’s advice, and, though they could not divine its reasoning, resolved to follow it.

The princess had the cook sent to her quarters, and, showing him the pearls in the chest, told him to work them into cucumbers as a delicacy for the sultan.

The cook, who had never heard of such a stuffing, took two steps back with an expression that gave away his thought.

“I know,” she said, “you must think me mad for requesting a dish that has never been made. True, it has never been attempted; but I am not mad. With the clearest mind, I ask you to make it. Go, invent, do your best, and bring me the pearls that remain when you are done.”

The cook did not resist and took the chest away. Princess Parizade had the house and garden cleaned and put in order for the sultan’s visit.

Next day, the two princes were at the hunting ground when the sultan arrived. He hunted until the heat of the sun forced him to stop. Then, Bahman at the sultan's side and Parviz ahead, the princes led him on horseback to their house, where Parizade waited to receive them.

On seeing the sultan, she threw herself at his feet, and the princes introduced the sultan to their sister. Bending to help her up, he considered her great beauty, her grace and healthy air, and something he could not place[46] but seemed unlike the countryside that was her home.

"The brothers," he said, "are worthy of the sister, the sister of her brothers. And if I may judge the inside by the outside, I understand now why the brothers agree to nothing without their sister's blessing. I hope to know you better when I see the house."

"Majesty," said Parizade, "this is only a country house, good enough for people like us who live far from the glittering world. It does not bear comparing with the great mansions of the city, to say nothing of the gorgeous palaces that belong only to sultans."

"What I can see of it," said the sultan, "leads me to think otherwise. I shall judge for myself when you have shown me in."

The princess led the sultan from room to room, each of which he considered with care.

"My dear," he said, "the mansions of the city would soon be empty if all the country houses looked like yours."

Then they moved into the garden, where the sultan's eyes were struck by the jet of golden water.

"What is this marvelous water," he asked, "so beautiful to see? Where is its source, and what craft has given it this shape?"

The princess led him on to the melodious tree,[47] and the sultan looked around for the musicians and found none.

"Are they underground?" he asked. "Or invisible in air?"

"Majesty," said the princess, "the music you hear is not the work of people but of the tree you see before you."

The sultan came nearer and was lost in the tree's sweet harmony.

"Is this tree," he asked, "in your garden by chance? Was it a gift or did you bring it from some distant land? It must have come from far;

otherwise, keen as I am on nature’s curiosities, I would have heard of it. What is it called?”

“It has no name but the singing tree,” said the princess, “and it does not grow in this country. The story of how it came to be here is too long to tell now. It is related to the golden water and the talking bird, which you may also see if you wish. I shall have the honor of telling it when you are rested from the hunt.”

“The marvels you have shown me,” said the sultan, “are sweeter than rest. Now let me see the talking bird.”

As they walked, the sultan saw that the trees were heavy with birds, each hanging on the air its particular song. He asked the princess why they gathered there.

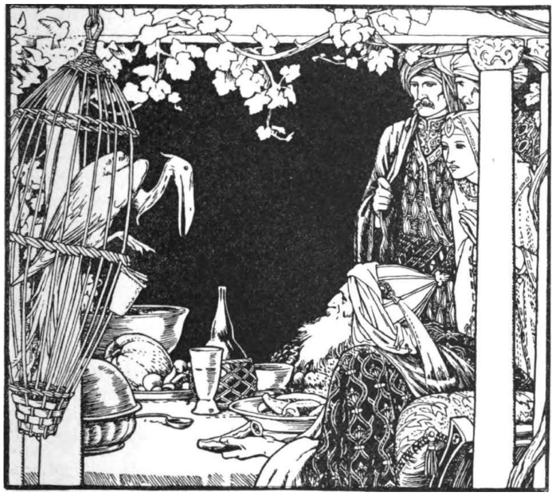
“They come from all around,” she said, “to accompany the talking bird. You shall see that its song is clearer even than the nightingale’s.”

They entered the drawing room, where the birdcage had been set by the window.

“Here is the sultan,” said the princess to the bird. “Now greet him.”

The bird stopped singing at once, and all the other birds fell silent, too.

“Welcome, Majesty!” said the bird. “May God cover you in blessings and lengthen the number of your days!”



The talking bird welcomes the sultan. Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1915).*

“Thank you,” said the sultan. “I am pleased to have met the king and sultan of the birds.”

The meal was served on the sofa. At the sight of the cucumbers, which he believed were stuffed in the usual way, the sultan reached for them and was startled to find them brimming with pearls.

"Pearls," he said, "cannot be eaten."

He looked up at the two princes and the princess to ask what all this meant, but the bird spoke first.

"How do you doubt your own eyes," said the bird, "when it comes to a stuffing of pearls, yet you were so quick to believe your wife had given birth to a dog,[48] a cat, a piece of wood?"

"I believed it," said the sultan, "because the midwives told me so."

"The midwives," said the bird, "were the sultana's sisters, who were jealous of her happiness with you. They abused Your Majesty's trust to satisfy their rage, and they would confess to their crimes if you had them questioned. The brothers and sister you see before you are your children, cast out by the jealous sisters and saved by the keeper of your gardens."

These words had the effect of a dazzling light.

"Bird," said the sultan, "it is easy to believe what you have revealed to me. The tenderness I felt from the moment I met them told me they were of my blood. Come, my children, let me love you as a father."

He rose and embraced the princes and the princess, mixing his tears with theirs, and said he would return the following day with the sultana, their mother.

The sultan hurried home on his horse. Back in his palace, his first move was to have the grand vizier put the sultana's two sisters on trial. They were taken from their home, questioned separately, tormented, tried, and sentenced to be quartered.[49] All this was completed in less than an hour.

The sultan, meanwhile, went by foot to the gate of the great mosque, and, with his own hands, delivered the sultana from the prison where she had suffered for so many years.

"I have come," he said in tears, "to beg your forgiveness for the injustice I have done you and to make the reparations you are owed. I have begun by punishing those who deceived me, and I hope my redress will be complete when I bring you to meet your children and mine. Come back and claim the rank and honor that are yours."

Early the next morning, the sultan led the sultana, changed from her rags of abjection into splendid robes, to their children's house. The whole court followed. Bahman, Parviz, and Parizade stood ready to greet them.

"These are your sons," the sultan said to the sultana, "and this is your daughter."

They embraced each other and wept with joy and consolation. After they had shared a sumptuous meal, and the sultana had been shown the three marvels, the sultan mounted his horse to return to his palace. Bahman rode on his right, Parviz on his left, and Parizade rode behind with her mother. As they approached the capital, a crowd gathered to greet them, cheering with joy at the sight of the sultana who had suffered so much, and their attention was drawn to the caged bird that the princess had brought with her, and whose song attracted all the other birds.

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1. See Galland's notes from Hanna Diyab's original version of this story in Part III.

2. *there was a prince of Persia:* Hanna Diyab's version of this story is set in Persia, and he provided the appropriate names for the characters. It is unclear whether he heard a telling of this story set in Persia or whether he encountered this story in another cultural context and transformed the setting to conform to the conventions of the *Nights*.

3. *identities concealed:* The prince of Persia resembles Caliph Harun al-Rashid in many *Nights* tales where he walks his capital in the disguise of a merchant to combat boredom or to discover the state of his kingdom.

4. *"bear him a prince":* Despite the ambition represented in the youngest sister's wish, the contrast that is developed is between the simple wishes of her older sisters—which focus on satisfying their appetite for food—and the romantic idealism of her own dream of a miraculous child. In the final version of the tale published as part of the *Arabian Nights*, the dream of a supernaturally gifted child is not reflected in the appearance of the sultana's three children, but, in other tellings of this tale, it is.

5. *"You have nothing to fear":* As in "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid" (another Diyab tale), the sultan shows kindness as he engages his subjects. This is a brief portrait of a generous ruler that contrasts with the threatening behavior of Shahriyar in the frame tale.

6. *a fever of jealousy:* The evil of jealousy drives this story in a pattern that is often repeated in the *Nights*. The jealous sisters are reminiscent of the envious sisters in "The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner" in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" and the jealous brothers in "The Tale of the Second Old Man" in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni."

7. *Both husbands petitioned their protectors at the court:* Galland's notes from the storytelling of Diyab do not include any mention of the necessity for the husbands of the jealous sisters to intervene to get permission for them to act as midwives.

8. *Then they produced a dead little dog:* In the version of this tale in Straparola's "Ancilotto, King of Provino," the villains are the queen mother and the midwife, and the babies are triplets who are replaced with three puppies (Irwin, "Afterword").

9. *ferried along the stream:* In Diyab's oral performance of this story for Galland, the baby is placed on a canal at the side of the Jordan River. As a Christian Maronite, Diyab would have understood the significance of this river as the biblical location of Christ's baptism. If this association was intended in his telling of this tale, the sultana's infants experience their own ritual purification as they enter the river and are then sent to live in a version of paradise.

10. *Where he might have come from:* Diyab's original delivery of this story to Galland suggests that the gardener assumed the child had been abandoned by one of "the queen's maids or the sultan's favorites." Any suggestion of illegitimate birth seems to have been excised by Galland in his French version.

11. *had to be restrained again by his grand vizier:* The sultan's compassionate veneer had been replaced by episodes of rage directed at his wife, which might be likened to the behavior of Shahriyar to his many brides. The resonance between this pattern of behavior and the frame tale may have been the reason that this tale was positioned at the end of the last volume of Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*.

12. *mothered a plank:* The word that Diyab used to describe the third substitution could be translated as "a misshapen piece of meat," and the notes added by Ulrich Marzolph and Anne Duggan to their translation of Galland's journal notes indicate that the term can denote a misshapen fetus (see Galland's notes from Diyab's performance of this tale in Part III). In a different version of this tale circulating orally in Germany and incorporated into the Grimm brothers' collection as "The Three Little Birds," the first two births were replaced with dogs, and the third with a cat, but the association of this animal with ill luck and the Devil was sufficient for the king to have his wife imprisoned.

13. *"fill my palace with monsters":* Ruth Bottigheimer sees this motif of monstrous births as characteristic of European folktales and argues that Galland's story draws from the work of Straparola. Robert Irwin, on the other hand, argues that there are a number of monstrous births in Arabic stories, and he cites the work of folklorist Hasan El-Shamy in support of his position ("Afterword").

14. *"They are to be pitied, not punished":* As in many of the stories of Caliph Harun al-Rashid in the *1001 Nights*, the vizier acts as the voice of reason, and Galland provides a compelling argument for compassion in this inserted dialogue.

15. *she bore her humiliation with such dignity:* Galland ensures that the virtue of the sultana is demonstrated throughout the story—even as she experiences horrid treatment at the hands of her jealous sisters, her unjust husband, and passersby.

16. *signs of beauty and distinction:* Galland seems to play upon the idea that nobility of birth would be reflected in the physical features of the children. In his reworking of this story, J. C. Mardrus ensures that the prophecy made by the sultana before her marriage is fulfilled. The girl sheds rosebuds when she smiles and pearls when she cries. In the Straparola story, the children can be identified as the missing royals because diamonds fall out of their hair when they brush it.

17. *her quick mind and bold spirit:* Diyab's original story emphasized the fact that Parizade was educated alongside her brothers. This not only sets up the princess's role later in the story, it also reflects Diyab's interest in women's education, as evidenced in his memoir.

18. *she added riding and archery to her skills:* Parizade is not the only female character in the *Nights* to display the physical skills of a warrior. In "The Tale of 'Umar Ibn al-Nu'man and His Sons" (a Crusader epic included in some Arabic manuscripts of the *Nights*), Princess Abriza is a skilled warrior and leads a troop of Amazons when she meets Sharrkan, the son of the caliph.

19. *an old Muslim woman appeared at the door:* The appearance of the old woman is not well motivated, but she serves to tie the two parts of the story together. She acts as a "helper," according to Mia Gerhardt, and might be seen as an agent of destiny (p. 304). In the version of this story contained in Straparola's "Ancilotto," it is the jealous sisters (or evil aunts) who suggest that the siblings go on a dangerous quest in the hope that it will be fatal (Irwin, "Afterword").

20. *"known as Bulbul Hezar":* In their notes to Galland's journal entries, Marzolph and Duggan state that *bulbul* refers to a nightingale and *hezar*, which means a thousand, could designate a particularly marvelous bird that could sing "a thousand different melodies."

21. *fearful of forgetting them:* Galland dwells on the mental state of Parizade in this scene in a way that deepens her character. This is evidence of the greater interiority that scholars argue characterizes the added tales of Galland and Diyab.

22. *"I may just as well be one of the lucky":* Fate typically plays a role in the sudden shifts of fortune in *Nights* tales, but this reference to the luck enjoyed by the majority of men is quite different from the frequent expression of resignation to fate in the original story collection.

23. *A hat in the shape of a parasol:* Galland expands upon the short description of the dervish's appearance contained in his notes from Diyab by adding some details. The hat described here seems to reflect the headgear of a dervish sheikh from the Ottoman Empire during the period of time that Galland was resident there.

24. *"I will try to help":* Like the old Muslim woman who appeared at their door, the dervish serves as a helper figure in this story. His appearance is otherwise unmotivated, and Gerhardt suggests that he is ultimately subservient to the marvelous objects ahead (p. 304).

25. *"defend yourself against invisible people?":* This would have been a natural fear, given that the jinn were usually invisible. In "Aladdin," the vizier's son and Princess Badr al-Budur are whisked away by the invisible hands of the jinni of the lamp on their wedding night and have no defense.

26. *he fished a ball from the bag beside him:* In addition to the three marvelous objects that are the subjects of the quest of the three siblings, the story is filled with other magical objects that

almost go unnoticed: the ball that the dervish gives each sibling to lead them to the mountain and the talismans that the brothers leave with their sister.

27. *“you will be changed to a black stone”:* The transformations in this story match the patterns in the core stories of the *Nights*. In this case, the resemblance to the Prince of the Black Isles in “The Tale of the Enchanted Prince” is obvious, but the victim in “The Jealous Sisters” at least remains oblivious to his curse.

28. *“So I have lost you”:* Galland again takes this opportunity to provide depth to the character of Parizade by dwelling on her feelings of guilt about the loss of her brother.

29. *“His death is God’s design”:* Prince Parviz expresses the kind of resignation to the will of God that is characteristic of the attitude of many characters in the original core of the *Nights*.

30. *turned to take revenge:* Galland varies the pattern a bit to maintain his reader’s interest. If the first brother is felled by fear, this one is destroyed by his need to strike out in anger.

31. *dressed as a man:* There are numerous examples of women dressing as men to achieve their objectives in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Both Maryam and Zumurrud do so as they save themselves and their lovers from a variety of villains. In “The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur,” Princess Budur dresses in her husband’s clothes and pretends to be Qamar as she travels to the Ebony Islands, where the king is so impressed that he insists that she marry his daughter and become king. Budur will maintain the artifice until Qamar arrives in the kingdom and becomes king in her place, taking Budur’s wife as his second wife.

32. *“if I stuff my ears with cotton”:* This detail seems to have been added by Galland to improve the story, unless he somehow remembered it from Diyab’s recital of this tale without having recorded it in his journal.

33. *stinging remarks about her sex:* The suggestion that crude insults were directed at Parizade appears in Galland’s notes from Diyab’s storytelling. Perhaps adding cotton to her ears was Galland’s way of protecting her modesty from such assaults.

34. *“such a brave person as you”:* Galland ensures that his reader understands that the princess’s victory is merited. The added tales gave the translator a greater opportunity to insert the kinds of morals that he believed the stories needed.

35. *“pour some of its water on each black stone”:* The disenchantment spell in this story is reminiscent of similar spells in “The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni.”

36. *she watered the black stones:* This moment was captured in an 1858 painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The artists and poets of the Pre-Raphaelite circle were particularly invested in the *Arabian Nights*. The Rossetti family, which owned several different versions, had a tradition of regularly reading the stories aloud.

37. *but he ha d died:* Once the function of the dervish as a helper figure on the path to the talking bird and the other magical items has been fulfilled, he simply disappears from the story.

38. *in a spot that the sultan of Persia:* This story rests on a series of plot devices that can only be interpreted as evidence of destiny’s hand steering the characters toward a just resolution. This is

not unusual in the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

39. *charged on their prey with a daring:* While the wit of Parizade was featured in the first part of the story, Galland seeks, in the second part, to emphasize the heroic qualities of the brothers as they display the qualities that should mark them as the sons of a sultan.

40. *three little golden balls:* Like the knife and the rosary, these balls are introduced merely to spark a particular thought in the minds of the characters.

41. *"happy news for you but not for me":* Galland again provides the reader a glimpse of the emotions of Parizade in this moment, and he reminds the reader of the danger that the anger of a sultan can present.

42. *no less spirited than they were brave:* Galland's references to the impressive qualities of the two brothers are a reminder that this story does not chronicle the rise of a humble character like Aladdin to glory, but rather the restoration of three noble children to their rightful place in the palace of power.

43. *on every subject he chose:* The princes also show the intellectual cultivation that would be expected for a high-born gentleman in the stories of the *Nights*.

44. *"Perhaps the talking bird will have ideas":* In this second part of the story, the talking bird takes on the "helper" role that was previously played by the old woman and the dervish—creating the context in which the broken royal family can be restored. While the singing tree and the golden water are wonderful ornaments, the talking bird is the real object of power in this story.

45. *"dig around the roots":* Other versions of this story (for instance, Mardrus's French reworking) maintain the plot device suggested in the third sister's wish and have the children produce pearls themselves, but Diyab finds a different way to include this plot element.

46. *something he could not place:* Galland provides a sense of the sultan's thoughts—tracking his slow recognition that these children are his own. Such moments give greater psychological depth to these stories added to the *Arabian Nights* by Galland and Diyab.

47. *The princess led him on to the melodious tree:* The golden water and the singing tree show themselves to be the ultimate ornaments of a pleasure palace. The story plays upon the desire of the powerful and wealthy to enjoy such rare treasures—something evident in the cabinets of curiosities of European rulers in the time of Galland and Diyab.

48. *"yet you were so quick to believe your wife had given birth to a dog":* The fault is clearly placed on the sultan's rash judgment of his wife, in a message presumably directed at Shahriyar—the other rash sultan in the room where these tales are being told.

49. *sentenced to be quartered:* The brutal torture and punishment of the jealous sisters is passed over quickly, since the real focus in the story is the reconciliation of father, mother, and children. Galland's notes on the oral story related to him reveal that Diyab said the sisters were torn to pieces by four horses. Diyab's memoir shows that he had a particular interest in the spectacle of criminal punishment in Paris during his stay there (*Book of Travels*, vol II, pp. 79–95).

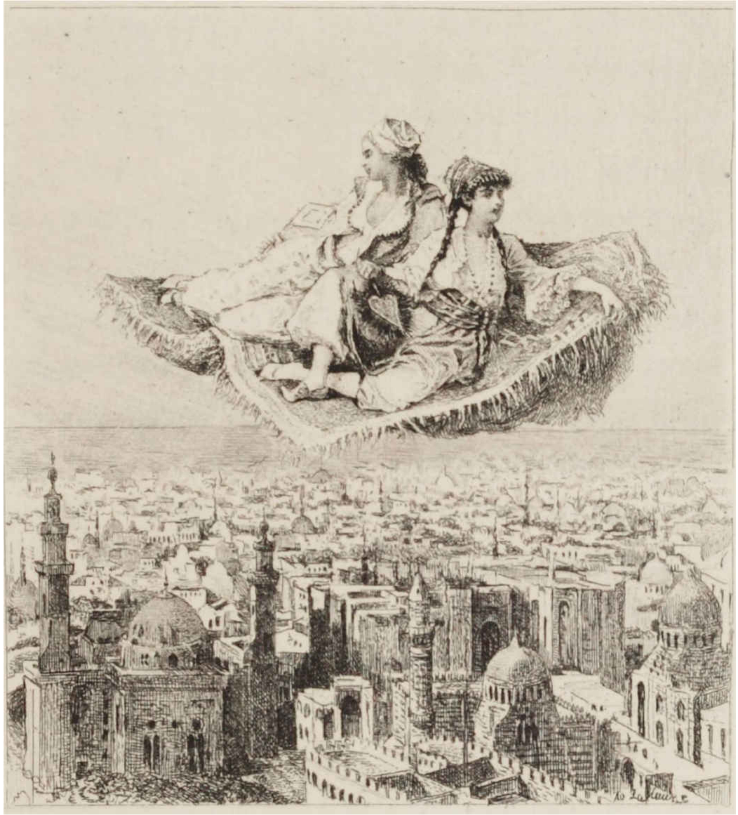
CONCLUSION TO THE STORY OF KING SHAHRIYAR AND HIS VIZIER’S DAUGHTER, SHAHRAZAD

THE SULTAN OF INDIA[1] could not help but admire his wife’s remarkable memory, which seemed to be without limit. For one thousand and one nights, she had entertained him, improved his trust in women, and softened his spirit. Now he was convinced of Shahrazad’s great mind and wisdom, and he remembered her courage in offering herself up as his wife, fearless of the fate that awaited her like all the others who had come before.

These and other qualities he knew she possessed moved the sultan to spare her life.

“I see no end to you,” he said, “who have delighted me with tales and eased my anger, so that I have come to reject the cruel rule I had set myself. You have my favor, and you shall be known for liberating all the girls[2] who would have burned at the stake of my rage.”

Shahrazad kissed his feet in thanks. News of her achievement spread through the city and into the provinces, drawing praise and blessings for the sultan and his wife from all their subjects.[3]



Shahrazad and Dunyazad take flight. Illustration by Adolphe Lalauze, from Théophile Gautier, La Mille et Deuxième Nuit *(Paris: Librairie des Amateurs, 1898). The highly respected French artist Lalauze provided etchings for Galland's edition of the* Nights *in 1881 and later produced illustrations for Richard Burton's private edition of his translation. Lalauze's work also appears in the translations of John Payne and Jonathan Scott.*

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1. *The sultan of India:* This epilogue to the story—which may have been created by either Galland or his publisher—is an effort to bring the frame story of the *Nights* to a close. The notion that Shahrazad's stories were being told not merely to distract the sultan from his plans to kill his wives but also to heal his spirit and teach him that the world also includes women of wit, courage, and loyalty comes from additions to the story collection like this one.

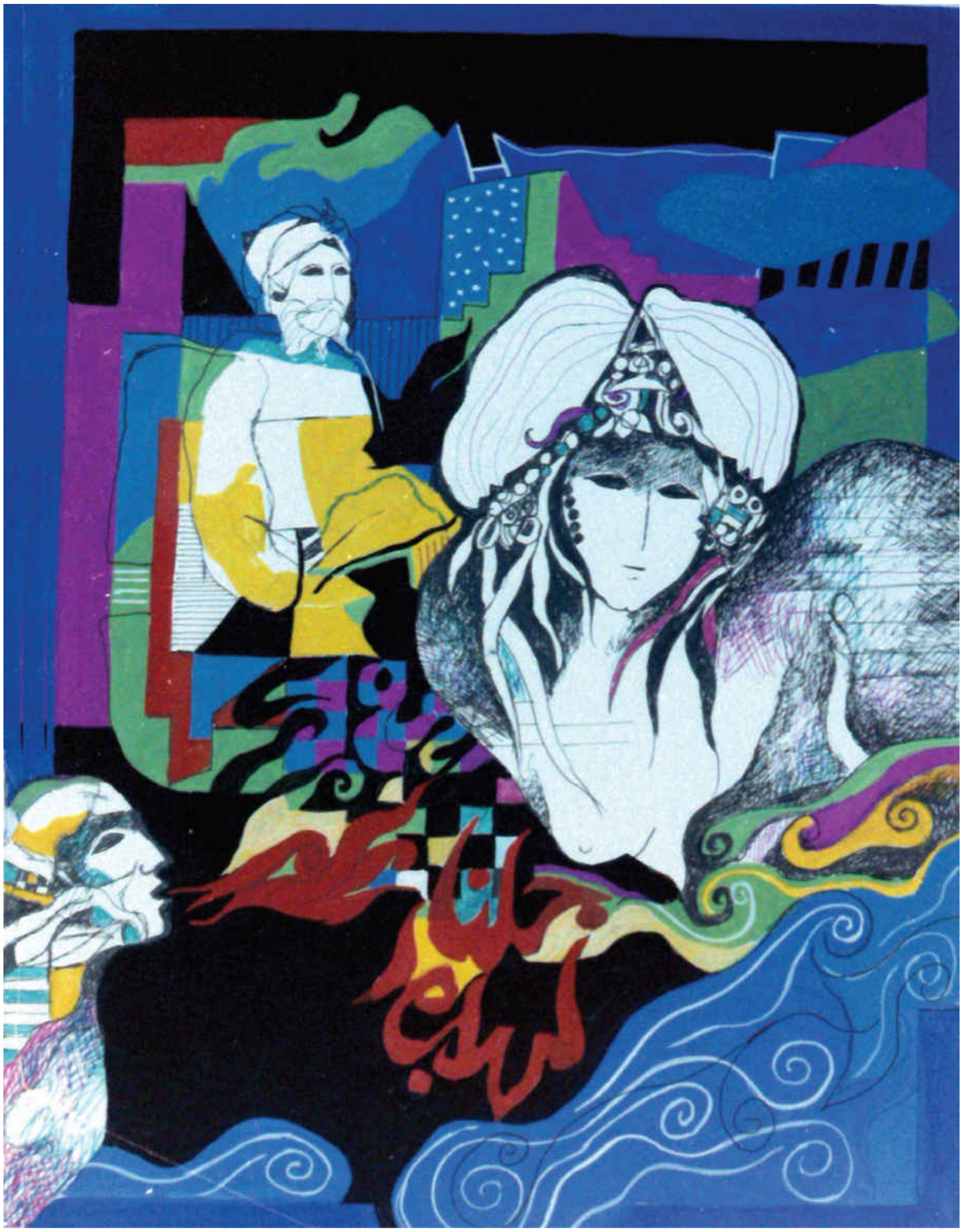
2. *"you shall be known for liberating all the girls":* Shahrazad's victory is proclaimed, as she not only survives the threat against her but also saves her kingdom. The temptation to rewrite this ending produced a profusion of 1002nd nights over three centuries. In 1796, Anthony Hamilton speculated in *The History of May-Flower* that Shahrazad had run out of stories and that her sister Dunyazad had to step in for her. With her greater political acumen, Dunyazad successfully wagers for and wins the life of her sister. In the nineteenth century, Théophile Gautier also imagined that Shahrazad runs out of stories, but the tale his narrator gives her leads to her death rather than her salvation. In Edgar Allan Poe's retelling from 1845, Shahrazad leaves Orientalist fantasies behind to narrate the technological wonders of the modern world (steamships, telegraphs, calculators), but she runs afoul of a husband who is automatically suspicious of a

woman who dares to cross into the rational world of modern man. Other writers imagine Shahrazad’s survival, but not the kind of happy ending that was fantasized in early eighteenth-century France. In Naguib Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days*, Shahrazad is released from the threat of death by her husband at the beginning of the novel, but it is a Pyrrhic victory, since the kingdom still remains mired in blood and corruption. And perhaps the most determined advocates of Shahrazad simply refuse to accept that the stories have to end. Hanan al-Shaykh’s retelling of the stories ends precisely where it begins: As night falls, Shahrazad’s words take over and her stories become “her shield against the sword hanging over her like an augury of dawn” (p. 288).

3. *the sultan and his wife from all their subjects:* The likely earlier variant of the tale in *A Hundred and One Nights*, in which the king marries Dunyazad and she calls for Shahrazad to accompany her, has a happy ending: “And thus every night, she told her stories, until a hundred and one nights had passed and Dīnārzād had become pregnant by the king. He assured both of them of their safety and security, and Shahrazād ceased to come to him” (Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, p. 23).

III.

HANNA DIYAB TALES



Dia al-Azzawi, 1986; printed with the permission of the artist.

INTRODUCTION

HANNA DIYAB TALES, AS TRANSCRIBED BY GALLAND IN HIS DIARY

ALTHOUGH BRIEF, the tales of Hanna Diyab recorded by Galland in his diary represent consistent, recognizable narratives. When he reworked a tale for publication, Galland respected the overall logic of the story as jotted down in his journal and did not contradict the overall outline provided by the Syrian storyteller. Galland's imagination never leaves Diyab's framework, as Galland's biographer, Mohamed Abdel-Halim, notes. I concur with his observation that, with very few exceptions, it is difficult to ascertain what Galland added to the tales in his published versions, since the notes may have stirred the translator's memory of the long storytelling sessions with Diyab.

Diyab did not so much compose these tales as adapt them from existing story elements that percolated along the trade routes that crossed in Aleppo. His apprenticeship with French merchants, and his exposure to French and Italian from an early age, only broadened the cultural horizons from which his narratives could draw. Diyab's main feat was to adapt the stories that he heard to the world of cities and commerce with which he was familiar, as Ulrich Marzolph has also concluded. A story like "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," which has clear precursors in tales of jinn-haunted caves, is brought by Diyab into an urban environment defined by rogues and sharpers, where the protagonists Marjana and Hogia Baba behave in a morally questionable fashion: stealing from thieves, killing those who threaten them, and mirroring the behavior of the captain of the bandits. The veneer of moralizing that Galland brought to this tale of Diyab would not prevent filmmakers from London to Bombay from re-situating "Ali Baba" in their own urban realms of tricksters, con men, and corrupt officials.

In his *Book of Travels* half a century after meeting Galland, Diyab recalled telling stories to the Frenchman who was translating the *Thousand and One Nights*, but he never suggested that he believed that these tales belonged to the original story collection. Nonetheless, the tales themselves make it evident that Diyab knew the remit he had been given, for he makes use of a range of story elements, motifs, and devices—such as framing tales within other tales—that are familiar from the *Nights* and its sibling story collections *A Hundred and One Nights* and *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*. Diyab's tales take place in a universe that is recognizably that of *The Thousand and One Nights*, anchored by the nightly wanderings in disguise of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid and replete with scenarios and plot twists reminiscent of "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni" and "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad." There are profligate merchants' sons and threatening jinn, cities built of precious stone and others frozen in time, and the requisite fabulous escapes with the aid of rukh birds.

Diyab knew how to read a room and entertain an audience, and these tales leave little doubt of his knowledge of the ingredients Galland sought as he labored on his *Nights*. Diyab's propensity for telling stories had not gone unnoticed by Paul Lucas, the French traveler who brought him from Aleppo to Paris on a voyage that lasted a year and a half, and who self-consciously paused as the two walked through Versailles to remark, in Diyab's recollection: "It's a long story, but let me tell it to you so that you know what you're talking about when you tell the story yourself." It was in

Lucas's Paris apartment, which doubled as a cabinet of curiosities, that Diyab was first introduced to Galland, and Diyab's knowledge of the kinds of stories that the treasure hunter Lucas appreciated may have shaped the tales he offered to the noted translator and antiquarian.

What follows are English translations of the French transcriptions of thirteen tales made by Galland of Diyab's storytelling over several sessions in the spring of 1709—fifteen tales if we count "Baba Abdallah" and "Sidi Numan" separately from "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid," in which they are embedded. There are no notes for "Aladdin," which Galland affirms he received in writing from Diyab. Galland included all but six of Diyab's tales in his *One Thousand and One Nights*.

The cross-outs, amendments, and above all the mistakes in grammar and spelling, reveal that the Syrian recounted his tales in French as Galland took notes in his pocket diary. As Ruth Bottigheimer points out, Galland mistook words that sound alike only in French, not Arabic. Her research proves what perhaps was evident to anyone who has held the Galland diary at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris—that Galland struggled to keep up with Diyab's narration. His hand in these entries is perceptibly rushed, not at all like the calm and controlled entries of days recollected in tranquillity, whether written down during narration or jotted down hurriedly from memory. The sheer density of elisions and strikeouts in the transcriptions of certain tales give this reader the impression that at times the Frenchman was overwhelmed by the pace of the story, as in the case of "The Sultan of Samarkand," a tale that Galland would not include in his *Arabian Nights*.

All told, this evidence suggests Galland did not have the opportunity to rewrite carefully as he listened to Diyab's storytelling. Doubtless, Diyab's tales were mediated via Galland's biases, which unmistakably reassert themselves in his published translations. There, Galland had the opportunity to set straight what he saw as the frivolity of the fairy tales then in vogue in Paris, as well as the moral ambiguity of Diyab's heroes and tales.

In his published versions, Galland borrowed from his experience as an editor and translator of Middle Eastern texts to flesh out the geography and customs of the lands traversed, such as in "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu." Beyond that, it is difficult to state with any degree of certainty what he may have added to the tales. The resemblance of the fabulous palaces in “Prince Ahmad” and “Aladdin” to Versailles, and the conspicuous presence of the etiquette and protocols of the French court in these tales, was long believed to be the work of the French translator. This might also apply to interpolations by Galland that seem designed to make the monarchs in the tales appear wise and benevolent, a quality consistent with Galland’s obsequiousness before his king but sometimes contrary to the plots of Diyab’s tales.

The recent publication of Diyab’s *Book of Travels* suggests these evocations of Eastern lands through the lens of Paris are just as likely to have been inpacted by the Syrian’s own travels with Paul Lucas, a French collector of treasures for the royal court. This is further evidence of the difficulty of disentangling Galland’s voice from Diyab’s in the tales that were published from the Syrian’s storytelling. That Diyab was likely to tell his own tales of Versailles someday was evident enough to Lucas as he showed the young Syrian the grounds and described their history to him.

The following selections from Antoine Galland’s Parisian diary (May 6 to June 2, 1709) have been translated by Ulrich Marzolph and Anne Duggan and edited by Paulo Lemos Horta.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

Ulrich Marzolph

Translating early eighteenth-century French to English is a tricky affair, particularly since many words (due to their Latin roots) sound familiar but have acquired a meaning different from the one they possess in contemporary English. Based on my draft translations, Anne E. Duggan has improved the English. In addition, she has diligently compared the translation with the original, paying particular attention to the early eighteenth-century meanings of specific words and correcting the draft translations accordingly.

In general, the translation aims to be as faithful and as close to the original as possible. Names are quoted as spelled by the author, with the scientific transliteration added in brackets at their first occurrence. The frequent and often inconsistent change of time levels in the narration has been retained. The punctuation is close to the original, though sometimes adapted in cases where sentences were too long to be intelligible. In particular, the author's frequent use of "etc." has been retained. In order to make the texts' structure more visible, paragraph breaks have been introduced. [Editor's note: New paragraph breaks have been introduced for this edition.]

Except for a limited number of notes, additions to the original text are marked in square brackets. Several notes are devoted to words or *expressions whose spelling in the text corresponds phonetically, although it is not identical to the spelling required by the context. This feature might serve as an additional argument for the hypothesis that the storyteller told the tales in French, and that Galland was jotting his notes rapidly during the oral performance, every now and then making grammatical mistakes based on phonetical similarities. This feature has been discussed in detail by Ruth B. Bottigheimer.*

HANNA DIYAB TALES INCLUDED BY GALLAND IN THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

PRINCE AHMAD AND THE FAIRY PARI BANU

(WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 1709)

Galland records in his diary that Diyab told him this story on May 22, 1709, and as he had in his previous days complained of being laid low by an illness, it is tempting to imagine Diyab chose for this occasion a tale whose first act culminated in a miraculous episode of healing. This first act turns, like so many of Diyab's tales, on the protagonists coming into possession of singular objects boasting magical properties—in this case, in the plot of three brothers' competition to gain the hand of a beloved cousin. What is certain is that when Galland elaborated the first part of the tale for publication, he was keen to highlight an altogether different set of marvels borrowed from his research—the fabulous pavilions and landscapes of Samarkand and India. In doing so, Galland felt in no rush and, as even his admiring biographer would complain, sent the three princes on grand tours extraneous to the plot.

In Diyab's telling, the romance of Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu reveals a storyteller comfortable with the elusive logic of the fairy tale, as *well as with the moral ambiguity of the fairy, her brother, and the tale's conclusion. Diyab is content to direct Galland to the "mystery" that links Ahmad's stray arrow to his discovery of Pari Banu's lair, perhaps fate. The Frenchman, uncomfortable with the narratives of "love at first sight" that propel tales of the* Nights, *feels the need to overexplain the connection, making the fairy into the orchestrator of all the events of the first act. Galland likewise clarifies the murkiness governing an ending in which Ahmad's brother-in-law kills Ahmad's father and acquires the crown for him by threatening to decimate the realm. Galland would labor to make Ahmad popular among the general population so they would want to make him its ruler, and to make the magician enlisted by his father more of a clear villain, as well as to excuse the violent turn of events in the end as the outcome of rude behavior.*

A SULTAN OF INDIA had three sons, Hussein [Ḥusayn], Ali [ʿAlī], and Ahmad [Aḥmed], and a niece called Light of Day [Arabic Nūr al-Nahār] whom he had taken to his palace after the death of the prince, his brother.

The sultan only looked for an occasion to marry her when he learned that the three princes were equally in love with her. In the dilemma in which he found himself, so as to not demonstrate any preference for one or the other, he proposed to send them to travel throughout the world, promising to give their cousin in marriage to the one of the three who would bring back the most precious and the most special rarity, and at the same time to give each of them the same amount [text: *pomme* instead of *somme*] of money for the costs of the journey and for the purchase they would have to make.

The princes accepted the proposal, they prepared their horses and saddlebags (text: *équipage*), and as soon as the sultan had counted out the money for them, all three set out through the same gate, and they left together, and they arrived at the first bivouac. There, as the road branched into three different paths, after they had feasted well that evening, they embraced each other and they separated, each following a different path, after agreeing to meet again at the same place in one year, and with the condition that whoever would arrive first would wait for the second, and the first and the second for the third.

Prince Hussein, after having passed through several cities and several provinces, arrived at one of the principal cities of India, where he lodged himself in the most magnificent and most beautiful khan.

The next morning, he went to the place where the richest merchants had their shops in the same area. The place was spacious and solidly built, with several iron doors, etc. As he had sat down in the shop of a merchant who politely invited him to do so, he saw a market crier approach who had a carpet of about six square feet whose price was set at thirty purses. The prince found the amount exorbitant for a carpet of such small size. He called the market crier and asked him what was so special about the carpet. The market crier told him that one would only have to seat oneself on it and immediately one would be taken to the place that one wished. He added that the [price of the] carpet was not as high as it should be, because he had orders not to sell it for less than forty purses. The prince did not wait for the increase in price. He counted out the forty purses on the condition, however, that he test it by going back to where his saddlebag was, seating himself on the carpet with the market crier, etc. The prince who had so quickly used his money and who saw that he could doubtless not do any better, or rather with certainty, than his brothers, etc., placed himself on the carpet and wished to arrive at the place where he was to wait; and he found himself there in an instant. He promptly folded the carpet, found a lodging and waited, etc. He had left his squire with the order to join him by traveling short distances each day and to bring his horse.

Ali, the second prince, traveled also for a very long time to another great city of India, close to the ocean. Like his older brother, he went to the place where the rich merchants gathered, and he saw a market crier who held in his hand a tube of ebony about a foot in length and about an inch in width, lined with a glass on each side, and which he advertised at thirty purses. Prince Ali was no less surprised than Prince Hussein. He wanted to know the reason why such a small gadget was at such a great price. The market crier informed him that by looking through one of the ends, one would see what one wished to see, what one would do there, what was there, at any distance whatsoever. When he tried it, he saw the king of Persia, his father, his cousin, etc., and he gave the forty purses for it.

Ahmad, the youngest of the three princes, arrived in Samarqand. He saw in the *bedesten*[1] a market crier who held an artificial apple in his hand, for which he demanded already thirty-five purses. This apple, when having someone smell it, even a dying person, would immediately restore one to perfect health. He thought that he could not make a better purchase. He bought the apple at forty purses and tried it out.

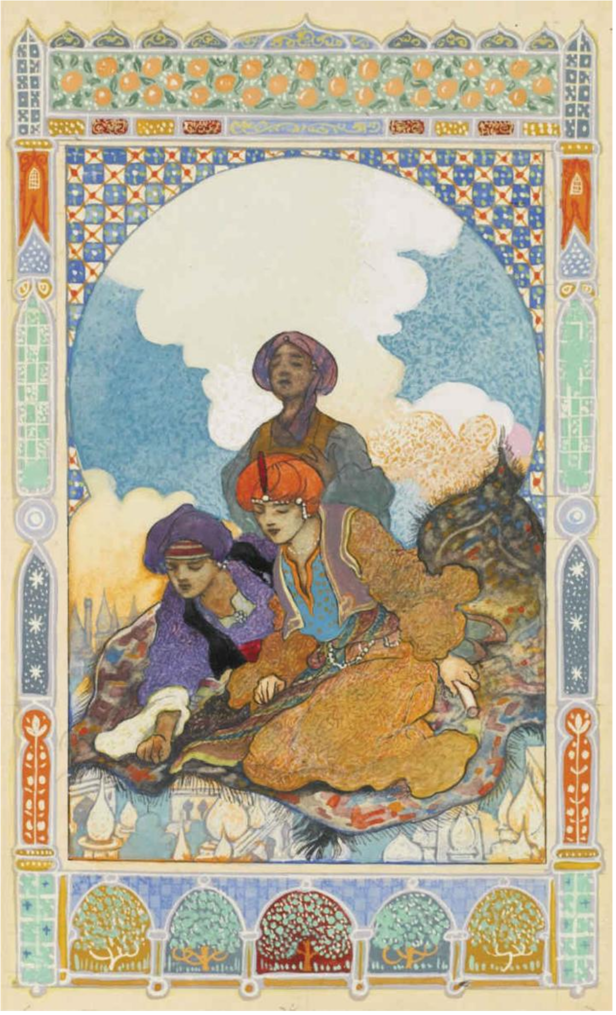
When all of the three princes were at their meeting place, they were all astonished when they saw that none of them in particular appeared to be more loaded than at their departure. After some mocking remarks from each other, out of competition the eldest announced the purchase that he had made of the carpet, its virtues, and what it had cost; Prince Ali did the same with the tube of ebony; and Prince Ahmad also showed the artificial apple and explained its virtues, etc.

Prince Ali thought that he would like to know the news of the princess, his cousin. He looked through the tube and he saw that she was about to die, etc. He shared the news with the princes, his brothers, with expressions of an excessive grief. Prince Ahmad was no less affected, and he was even more so since he had the remedy to bring her back to life. Prince Hussein, who had his own interest in the affliction, did not wait for his younger brothers to ask him to use the carpet. He spread it in the middle of the chamber, the three of them sat down on it, and in a few moments they were transported to the chamber of the princess. Prince Ahmad immediately put the apple [text: pear] beneath her nose and she regained her strength in a moment, she got up and asked to be dressed.

The three princes went to present themselves to the sultan and told him what had just happened. Prince Hussein, Prince Ali, and Prince Ahmad each argued for their own merits, etc. The sultan in his uncertainty has recourse to another means of deciding. Each of them was to take a bow to see who would shoot the farthest. Prince Ali shoots farther than Prince Hussein, and the arrow of Prince Ahmad is not found.

Prince Ali marries his cousin.

Prince Ahmad looks for his arrow, and he finds it three or four leagues away, close to some barren rocks. As he could not believe that his arrow could have naturally gone so far, he imagined that there must be a mystery around it, and that this mystery concerned his happiness. He looks around in the brush and [finds] an iron trap door beneath the shrubbery. He opens it and, some steps down, he notices a palace of great magnificence.



The brothers are transported home on the magic carpet. Illustration by Charles Robinson from The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Perie Banou *(1915).*

Right away, he sees a superbly and magnificently dressed [woman] who approached him; the lady asks him who he is. The prince asks her the same question, and she responds that her name is Pari Banu, etc., and she proposes to marry him.

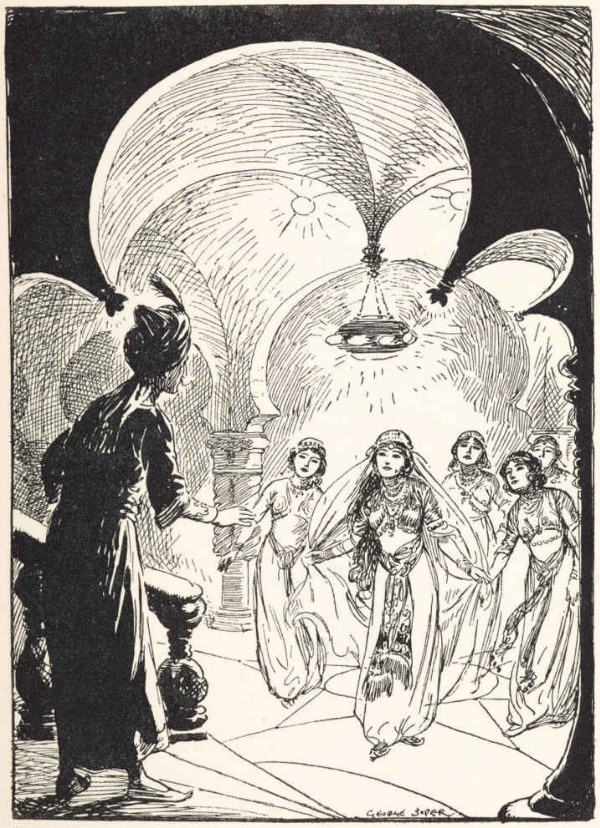
They marry.

After several days, the prince suggests to Pari Banu that they visit the sultan, his father; she declines at first. In the meantime, the sultan, being worried about Prince Ahmad’s destiny, consults his grand vizier. The vizier summons a magician. The magician assures him that Prince Ahmad is not dead, but she does not know exactly where he was.

The prince receives permission to go visit the sultan, after having promised her under oath to return. He sees the sultan from time to time, and the sultan has him observed by the magician, who one day finds him near the rocks. When the prince came out [from the rocks], she feigns immediately to have a high fever and to shiver. The prince meets her, turns back, has her enter into the underground palace, presents her to Pari Banu, and asks her to receive her and to care for her out of compassion. She is suspicious of her, receives her nevertheless.

The prince goes to see the sultan. The magician, after having observed everything, informs the sultan, who becomes jealous of the prince. He consults the magician. The magician advises him to have the prince killed by asking him to carry out things that would be impossible for him.

At first, he asks him for a pavilion to cover his entire army, that could be held in his hand. The prince returns to the underground palace very sad, and he has difficulties explaining the reason for his sadness. Pari Banu has one of her maids bring her a tent even smaller than the one the sultan asked for. The prince thinks that she is mocking him, etc. He presents it to the sultan, and it proves to be so large as to cover two other armies that are equally numerous.



" WELCOME, PRINCE AHMED."

Pari Banu greets Prince Ahmad. Illustration by George Soper from The Arabian Nights *(1913).*

The sultan makes a second demand, namely, to bring him water from the Fountain of Lions. He returns to the palace as sad as before, etc. Pari Banu gives him a ball of thread. Mount your horse, she says, and take along another horse loaded with a sheep cut into four quarters. Throw the ball in front of you and follow it to the place where it stops. You will find four lions guarding the gate of a palace that will be open. Throw a quarter of the sheep to each of the lions, enter promptly while they eat, draw water into a vessel that you will carry with you, and come back as promptly as, etc.

The prince executed the matter. He drew the water without descending from the horse, through the muzzle of [the statue of] a lion, from which it was falling into the basin. He got back and the lions had not yet finished, but when he was far away, he was quite astonished and in great fright to see two lions running after him. The lions reached him. But instead of doing him harm, they caressed him, etc., and they placed themselves one in front and the other at the back of the horse. In this manner, he entered the city, the palace, and the hall of reception, where he presented the vessel.

The sultan consults the magician again. She advises him to ask him to bring a man of only a foot and a half tall, with a beard thirty feet long and a stick weighing five hundred pounds on his shoulder, and who has the gift of speech. This appeared to be difficult.

He went back to Pari Banu, etc. She called her brother, Schaibar [Shaybar], one of the maleficent jinnis, who just happened to be there, etc. [Ahmad] left and went with him to the city, where everyone ran away as soon as they saw him appear, dogs, etc. He took him to the palace where he appears before the sultan. You asked me, and here I am with what is of concern. Instead of responding, the sultan covered his eyes with his hands so as not to see him. And before Prince Ahmad could prevent him from doing so, he gave him a strike with the iron bar that killed [the sultan]. He wanted to kill the grand vizier as well. He prevented [Schaibar] from doing so because he knew that [the grand vizier] had only given good advice to his father, but he killed some of the viziers who attacked him.

Schaibar threatened to kill all the inhabitants of the city unless they acknowledged the prince as king, as sultan. He was acknowledged, and he went to get Pari Banu, whom he brought back to the palace.

Hanna, who came to see me in the afternoon, entertained me with this tale.

MARJANA'S PERSPICACITY, OR THE FORTY ROBBERS EXTINGUISHED THROUGH THE SKILLFULNESS OF A SLAVE

(MONDAY, MAY 27, 1709)

Diyab's tales demonstrate his ingenuousness in adapting plots to the cities and mercantile settings with which he was familiar, as has been shown by comparisons to their analogues and precursors (Marzolph, 101 Middle Eastern Tales, *p. 472). Nowhere is this gift more in evidence than in this story, where Diyab relocates to an urban setting plot elements that likely originated in tales of appetite tests where magic caves are governed by jinn or giants, as Aboubakr Chraïbi has noted. In Diyab's original title and emphasis, this is the tale of Marjana's perspicacity, navigating a world where her master is threatened by intrigues that turn on disguise, in an urban setting more akin to that inhabited by the rogues and sharpers of "The Tale of Dalila the Crafty." In this context it should not surprise that Marjana distinguishes herself via a series of feats of escalating moral ambiguity, from covering up the death of Qasim and lying about his funeral preparations, to dispatching the thieves and their leader. Revealing his identity or apprehending him and calling the authorities is never an option, given that the first act of the plot turns sympathetically on the act of stealing from thieves.*

The moral ambiguity of this tale appears to have greatly disturbed Galland, and his additions to the narrative reflect a need to make Marjana serve his particular belief in predestination. In introducing Marjana, he therefore emphasizes that she was destined for higher things. In truth, none of the distinctions between the characters seemed sharp enough for the Frenchman, who insists on making Qasim and his wife more stereotypically avaricious from the start, exaggerating the moral difference between the ambition of both brothers to steal from the thieves, *and excusing Hogia Baba's actions at every turn, as in the tale's conclusion, where he will clarify that Hogia Baba took only as much as he needed. Diyab's original telling contains gruesome images excised from Galland's published text, as Hogia Baba in his haste to leave the cave mixes his brother's quartered body parts together with the gold looted from the thieves' cave in the sacks draped over his donkeys. The original plot turns on the mirroring effect between the thieves and those who steal from them and cover up their crimes.*

IN A CITY of Persia close to the borders of India, there were two brothers, one very rich, great merchant, living comfortably, etc., and the other poor, making his living by going to cut wood in a nearby forest.

The first was named Qasim and the other Hogia Baba [Ḥojā Bābā].

Hogia Baba found himself one day as usual in the same forest with three donkeys, etc. From afar he noticed a large troupe of people who raised a cloud of dust on horseback and who were coming directly toward him. He climbed up a large tree.

When they approached, the dust settled, and he saw forty large, well-armed horsemen. They dismounted and let their horses graze in the vicinity. Close to the large trees, there was a great rock. The robbers moved closer to a hidden door, etc., that was so close to the tree that Hogia Baba heard the first one pronounce these words: “Open, Sesame!” Immediately the door opened. They entered, the door closed, and they stayed there for a long time.

They came out. When they were all out, the last one turned around, and in turning pronounced these words: “Close, Sesame!” And the door closed. They mounted their horses.

When they had gone, Hogia Baba climbed down, placed himself in front of the door, pronounced the same words. The door opens, the door closes [behind him], and with the help of the light that came from above, etc., he found the table set, and lots of foodstuff, great amounts of valuables, etc., and above all silver and gold in heaps, etc. It had been a robbers’ hideout for a very long time, etc. They would go to steal from far away, would come back carrying their booty from their [raids], and would refrain from harming the surrounding area, etc.

The woodcutter loads his three donkeys with gold and wood on top in sacks that he found among the furniture, and he returns to the city. He goes home, into a small courtyard, closes the door and unloads the donkeys, carries the sacks into his house.

His wife, who is totally surprised, suspects that her husband is a robber. Hogia Baba bids her to be silent, tells her the facts.

The wife wants to count the gold. Her husband tells her that she is a fool, that this is useless. She wants to at least measure it. The husband gives in and lets her do [what she wants]. She goes to fetch a scale from Qasim, her husband's brother. Qasim's wife lends her one. As she knew about their poverty, and curious to know what kind of grain she wanted to measure, she applies grease to the bottom of the scale. The woman goes to measure the gold. Having placed the scale on the heap of gold, she finds out how many measures it holds. While her husband buries the money somewhere in the house, she takes the scale back to her sister-in-law, who looks at the bottom and finds a piece of gold stuck to it. In the evening, when Qasim returns, she tells him about it.

The next day, greedy Qasim, who is not satisfied, etc., goes to his brother, wants to know from where he has acquired so much money. He threatens to denounce him. Hogia Baba tells him the affair the way it is and offers to share it with him. The brother wants to be shown the whereabouts.

Hogia Baba is reluctant. He is forced to satisfy him.

The next day, Qasim goes to the forest with ten mules, he finds the place, says the words, the door opens, he enters, it closes. He sees [the treasures]. When he wants to leave in order to load his mules, he no longer remembers the words, so occupied was he by what he had just seen. He found [i.e., tried to pronounce] various sorts of grains, etc.

The robbers arrive unexpectedly. They are surprised, they do not understand, etc. They quarter him, and [they put] each quarter on each side of the staircase by which one descends. Legs […] and trunk. They leave after having eaten and close the door, etc.

In the evening, when Qasim's wife notices that her husband has not returned, [she] goes to Hogia Baba, asks that her husband come back, cries, etc. Hogia Baba consoles her, telling her that he might come back at night, etc.

The next day, she makes even more noise.

Hogia Baba takes his three donkeys, returns to the forest, etc. He arrives at the cave, he pronounces the words, the door opens, and he sees the state his brother is in. He loads his donkey with gold, the body in several bags of gold, covers it all with wood, and returns, tells his sister-in-law. Warns her in order to prevent her from crying by offering to take her as his wife, together with his own. She consents, so as to hide the affair.

That very day, Marjana asks for pills for the sick who are in danger in the neighborhood, etc. The next day, she does the same thing, asking for an elixir as final remedy, etc. In the evening she behaves like a mourning woman, the next day early in the morning she goes to the square, addresses herself to an old cobbler who had opened [his shop] before the others, begins by giving him a gold coin.

What do you want from me?

She tells him that she wants him to close [his] eyes until [they would reach] a certain place. He is reluctant, she gives him another gold coin. He lets himself be led [away], she closes his eyes and leads him to her master. She shows him what it is about, he is reluctant, she promises another gold coin. He stitches [the quarters of the dead body together], etc. She takes him back with his eyes covered, she takes off the blindfold, and he returns to his shop.

They inform the mosque about the burial, and meanwhile Marjana enshrouds the deceased. The servants of the mosque, when arriving, want to wash the body. Marjana says that the affair is done. Crying, Marjana follows in front, pulling out her hair, etc. The brother follows the corpse, the neighbors accompany him crying in the manner of the country, etc.

Hogia Baba goes to live in his brother’s house, transports his money during the night, etc. He had a son who takes care of his uncle’s shop, etc.

The robbers return sometime later, surprised not to find the dead body, and the bags of gold more diminished than before. Their leader spurs them to take revenge and offers a reward or death to the one who would discover the house. One presents himself, he changes his dress, he goes to the city, he speaks very early in the morning to the cobbler. He asks him, seeing that he is so old, whether he still sees clearly, and whether he can stitch well.

I have sewed up well a dead man …

The robber rejoices, he gives him a gold coin, he asks for the address, he remarks that he cannot because they had blindfolded him. You can well remember the path you took, come, I will blindfold you, etc. Money in hand, he accompanies the robber and finds the house.

The robber marks the door with chalk, etc.

Marjana leaves the house. When returning, she notices the mark, she takes some chalk and marks the other doors in the same manner, from one side and the other, to the right and to the left.

In the meantime, the robber goes to notify the robbers, etc. They come to the town, they disperse. The robber and the leader spend the day exploring, he sees several doors marked in the same manner, etc. He returns with the other robbers, and the one who had succeeded so badly is punished. A second one presents himself, etc. He goes to speak to the same cobbler, who shows him the house in the same manner.

He marks the door in red in another, less obvious place.

Marjana notices it and marks the other doors in the same place, this robber is punished like the other one.

The leader takes care of the matter himself. He comes to the city. He finds the house with [the help of] the same cobbler. He remembers it well and returns to the forest and to the cave. He prepares as many large leather vessels for storing oil as he has men, he hides each of them in one of those vessels that he rubs with oil, and he fills one of them with oil. He loads them on mules and starts out, and he arrives at Hogia Baba's house at dusk.

He was by the door where he was taking some fresh air after dinner.

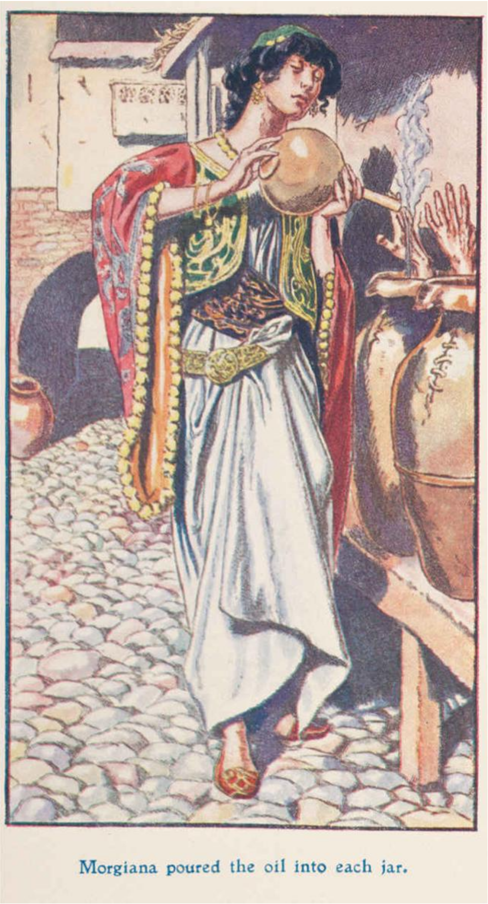
The chief of the robbers asks him to be so kind as to let him enter into his courtyard to pass the night. Not only does he grant him this, he orders that the horses be taken to the stable and given barley [and] hay. The vessels are discharged in the courtyard, they invite the chief for dinner. After dinner, he goes to each vessel and alerts the robbers to cut the vessels open with the knives with which they were armed, when he would throw pebbles to alert them. He is given a room to sleep.

Before going to sleep, Hogia Baba asks Marjana to get his bath linen ready so that he could go [to the public bath] before daybreak, and to prepare a broth for him upon his return. Marjana puts the pot on the fire, but there is no lamplight. A servant tells her to take some oil from one of the vessels that were in the courtyard, etc.

At the first vessel, the robber inside asks in a low voice if it was time; perceptively, she tells him no, but soon. She goes to all [of the vessels] and finds the same thing. The vessel with oil was the last one in the row. She takes some oil to light the lamp, she fills a kettle with it that she boils with tar, she pours some of the scorching hot [liquid] into each vessel, and kills all the robbers, etc.

The leader throws pebbles, nobody responds.

He descends, and he finds all of the robbers [dead], and he flees from house to house.



Morgiana poured the oil into each jar.

Marjana pours boiling liquid into each vessel. Illustration by Dora Curtis from Tales from the Arabian Nights, *adapted by F. C. Tilney (1914).*

Hogia Baba returns from the bath, he learns what happened, he has the robbers buried in his garden, finds a way to sell the mules, etc.

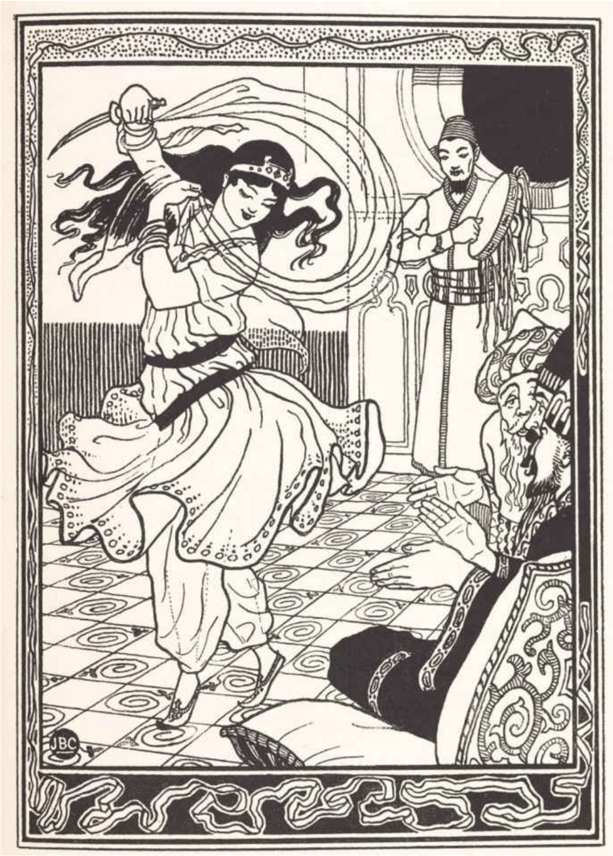
The chief of the robbers, left on his own, disguises himself as a merchant. He rents a shop facing that of Hogia Baba's son, he befriends him, great familiarity, he invites him several times.

The son wants to reciprocate, he tells his father about it, who gives his consent, Marjana prepares the dinner.

The son brings the false merchant, they sit down at the table. The chief excuses himself from eating because he would not eat bread, meat, or stew that had salt in it. Hogia Baba has Marjana come and orders her to prepare bread immediately and some stew without salt. Marjana suspects wickedness, because salt is a sign of friendship and one does not do anything wrong when eating it. She prepares the bread and the stews, etc. They dine.

After the dinner, dancers, etc.

Marjana takes a mask, the bayonet at her side, dances last, and is admired. In the end she approaches Hogia Baba, who gives her a number of gold coins, and she comes up to the son who does the same thing. She drives the dagger into the breast of the false merchant. Hogia Baba cries out, she puts his mind at ease by showing him the manner in which the chief of the robbers was armed.



Marjana dances. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

Praise for Marjana, he gives her to his son in marriage. The news spreads, about the death, he makes [it] known while concealing what needs to be concealed. Through various means, he takes all there was [in the cave] of gold and silver, furnishings, etc., and hides it.

They live happily and content, etc.

THE ENCHANTED HORSE

(MONDAY, MAY 13, 1709)

This record of Diyab's telling of "The Enchanted Horse" provides a fascinating glimpse into the differences between his storytelling and Galland's writing—or, more accurately, rewriting of the notes jotted down from Diyab. Here the stage and the stakes are quickly established: During festivities, the king of Persia is tempted by an Indian magician's offer to trade a flying horse for his daughter in marriage, provoking the ire of his son. In Galland, the first act is taken up by long explanations provided by the characters: the magician's presentation of his horse, the king's explanation of his interest, the prince's declaration of his indignation (as Abdel-Halim has noted). Galland's own voice as scholarly narrator imposes itself and risks stalling the tale completely, seizing a passing reference to unspecified festivities to justify a lengthy exposition on celebrations of the Persian New Year.

The tale once again demonstrates Galland's unease with the possibility of a young woman falling in love at first sight—in this case, the princess of Bengal as she is awakened by Prince Firuz Shah when the enchanted horse lands him at her palace. As in "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," Galland prefers the would-be lovers to get to know each other through dialogue, which allows for the development of reciprocal feelings, as Abdel-Halim notes. Galland's biographer also attributes to Galland the interpolation of the princess seeking the opinion of her retinue about her new love, but Diyab's attention to the interplay and intimacy of princesses with their ladies-in-waiting in Versailles in the Book of Travels *suggests the possibility that this added detail had been mentioned by the Syrian and recalled by the Frenchman when he returned to his notes.*

THE MARONITE HANNA told me this Arab tale:

During a public celebration, when the most talented people, both from the country and foreigners, presented to the king several kinds of rare items, an Indian showed him a wooden horse.

The king asked him what made this horse special.

Sire, answered the Indian, wherever I wish to go, this horse will carry me there in very little time. He gave him a demonstration and the king asked him how much it cost.

The Indian answered that he had not bought it, but that he had given a daughter of his to acquire it, and that he would only arrange himself with His Majesty for His Majesty's daughter, the princess.

At first, [the king] rejected the proposal; but the longing to possess the horse made him consent to give her to him. The prince [his son] shows his indignation. The king tells him to examine the horse himself.

The prince mounts on top and is lifted up into the air almost as far as the sun. As he was not without wits, he found out how to turn the bolt that made the horse descend. He descended and alighted on [text: fell onto] the terrace of a palace when it was almost nighttime.

Pressed by hunger, the prince descended a staircase.

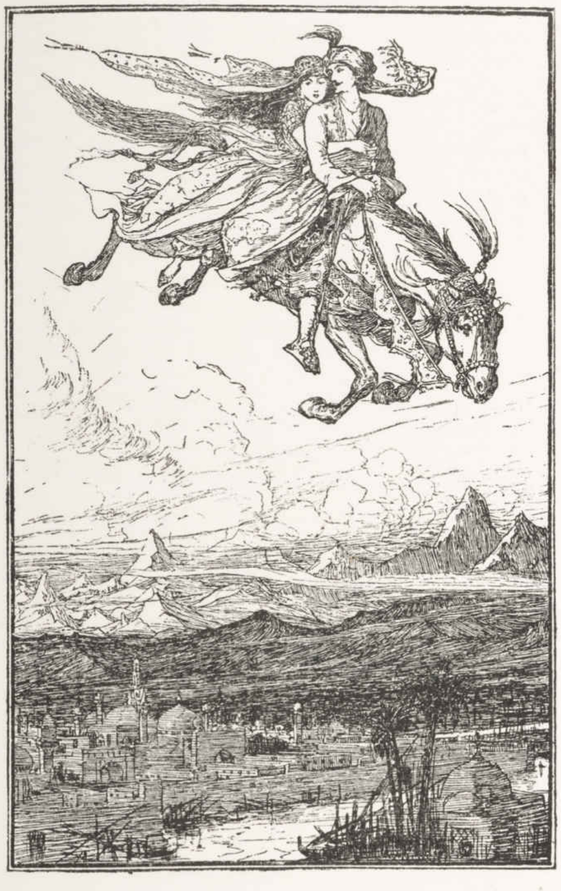
He finds a hall where eunuchs were sleeping with their unsheathed sabers close to them. He sees light in a room and goes there, he finds it magnificent and finds there, sleeping beside her women, a princess with whom he falls in love.

He awakens the princess, and she falls in love with him.

She has [her servants bring] something to eat, and she commands one of the eunuchs to keep the secret.

After a stay of forty days, the prince wants to return home. The princess objects; she decides to accompany him. He takes her on the wooden horse. He stops in a garden not far from the city and leaves her in the garden pavilion (text: palace) with the wooden horse. He goes to present himself to the king, his father, whose mood changes from grief to happiness, and who frees the Indian whom he had imprisoned.

While the king gathered the queen and all the court, preparing to go and receive the princess, the Indian goes ahead, passes through to the princess by making the guard believe that he was coming on behalf of the prince, who had ordered him not to let anyone enter. He abducts the princess on the wooden horse, and the prince who, when arriving, learns about the abduction from the guard himself, [and in his despair] does not want to leave the garden.



THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS ARRIVE AT THE CAPITAL OF PERSIA ON THE ENCHANTED HORSE

The enchanted horse. Illustration by H. J. Ford from The Arabian Nights Entertainments *(1898).*

He disguises himself as a dervish and goes to look for her all over the world.

The Indian carries the princess off and puts her on the ground in a wood close to a capital city, where he goes to fetch provisions.

He urges the princess to give in to his desire, she resists, and, at this moment, the hunt brings the king [the sultan] to that place. The Indian wants to make him believe that the princess is his wife. The princess assures the king to the contrary.

The king has the Indian beheaded, takes the princess along.

He falls in love with her, celebrates marriage, and when he wants to come and sleep with the princess, she pretends to be mad; he calls doctors from all directions, she does not let anybody come close to her.

The [Persian] prince, her beloved, arrives in this city where he learns in the khan where he lodges about the story of the princess, her illness, and the search that the king had made for doctors from all sorts of countries to cure her. He takes the outfit of a doctor with a long beard and announces in the city that he is a foreign doctor, passes in front of the palace.

The guards have him enter, run to announce it [i.e., his presence] to the king, who has him come forth and who has him first see the princess without being seen [by her]. He hears her utter some verses, indicating that she continues to love him, and the despair she was in because of their separation. He indicates to the king that he identified the princess's illness and asks to see her in private.

The princess does not want to talk to him. He appeases her and makes himself known. He convinces her to let herself be escorted, and to be presented to the king the next day, by him. The next day, he presents her to the king and makes him understand that she is only half cured. He asks him [i.e., the king] about the way in which she has come to his palace, as if he had not learned it from the princess.

The king informs him and tells him about the wooden horse that the king had stored in his treasury.

The doctor prince says that this information would give him the opportunity to cure her completely, and he asks for different kinds of perfume. He proposes to the king to adorn the princess with the most precious jewelry he has, and to assemble his officers, his guards, and as many people as he could in the great square.

The horse is carried to the square, where the king is with all of his court, etc.

In the presence of the king, etc. The prince perfumes the horse, then the princess, after having her mount the horse, he mounts behind her, and after having applied other perfumes around the horse, he turns the bolt and rises into the air with the princess, and he returns to the palace of the king, his father, where he marries the princess. The king who had lost them was in despair, but to no avail.

THE NIGHT ADVENTURES OF HARUN AL-RASHID

In the tradition of Nights *storytellers in the streets and cafés of Cairo, Aleppo, and Istanbul, Diyab embeds tale within tale to add interest and suspense to this story. Though "The Tale of the Poor Ropemaker" was told days later, in another storytelling session, an early reference in the frame tale of "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid" makes it evident that Diyab was already setting the stage for its incorporation and its telling: "He passes in front of a great mansion newly built, etc. He is told that it belongs to Khogia Hasan, the ropemaker." For all the romance of the frame of al-Rashid, the embedded tale also attests to Diyab's attention to the material culture of the poor, as he notes that the ropemaker hides a coin in his turban, "as all the poor people do." If enhanced attention to poverty and the constraints on social advancement (the theme of the ropemaker's tale) are considered to be the distinguishing feature of the added tales of Galland, then Diyab's insight here, as later in his* Book of Travels, *suggests that he was just as likely to have nurtured these strains as the French translator.*

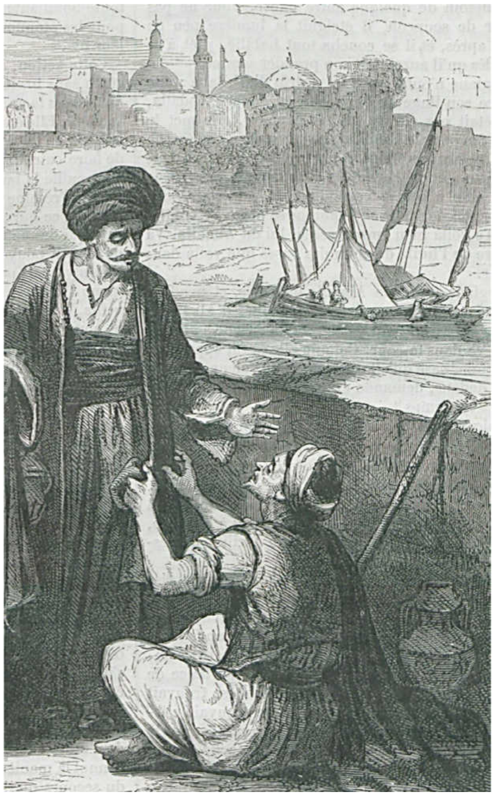
Embedding tale-within-tale for suspense is a feature that would also mark Diyab's writing decades later about the time he spent in Paris. In his memoir, the story of his sudden arrest is related as a sophisticated series of framing and embedded tales, not unlike those in the One Thousand and One Nights. *Borrowing the strategy of Shahrazad, Diyab builds suspense through frequent interruptions to the narrative, introducing a fascinating series of rogues and heroes against the backdrop of Enlightenment Paris. As Diyab searched for a more secure position in Parisian society, his friend al-Shami offered him both his daughter in marriage and the proprietorship of his Paris café. While Diyab was considering the offer, he was arrested by the Paris police because of an association with another Arab resident accused of jewel thefts. Dragged through the streets to what* *he imagined would be a forceful interrogation, Diyab was only saved by the intervention of Paul Lucas*.

CALIPH HARUN AL-RASHID, who found himself in great melancholy, informed his grand vizier about this, and the vizier, after having proposed to him various sorts of entertainment, in the end suggested to him to disguise himself according to his custom.

They disguised themselves and left together.

At the end of a bridge, they encountered a blind man. The caliph gave him a *séquin*,[2] the blind man grabbed the caliph by the hand and [did] not release him until the caliph slapped him, etc. The caliph wants to know the reason and commands the vizier to bring him [i.e., the blind man] to him the next morning.

While passing through a square, he sees a young man mounted on a horse that he was cruelly mistreating with heavy blows from a whip. The caliph orders the vizier to have him brought to him the next morning.



The caliph encounters a blind man. Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

He passes in front of a great mansion newly built, etc. He is told that it belongs to Khogia Hassan, the ropemaker, etc.

[BLIND MAN ABDALLAH]

The blind man tells his story the following day.

I once was very rich, he says, and I possessed eighty camels that I rented out to the merchants, etc.

Upon returning one day without a load, I encountered a dervish in the desert, and the dervish proposed to load my camels with gold and jewels, on the condition that I give him forty of them. The dervish brought me [text: him] to a place where he opened the earth by way of a conjuration. I loaded my camels with gold and jewels, and the dervish only chose a small box with a certain ointment.

When the camels were loaded and the dervish had closed the ground [so as to appear] as before, I left the forty camels with him and we took leave of each other.

He was not yet far away when I called him loudly.

He stopped.

I spurred my horse and approached him. I obliged him several times to return the camels to me in groups of ten, on the pretext that he was a dervish and that they were of no use to him. I also obliged him to give me the small box and to tell me what it was good for.

He told me, finally, that if one applied the ointment to the left eye, one would immediately see all of the most hidden treasures of the world.

I gave him the box so that he would apply the ointment to my eye himself, and I saw the effect, but since I had to close my right eye, I wanted him to apply the ointment to it as well.

He warned me that I would become blind, but I did not want to believe him. He applied the ointment, I became blind.

He kept the box, and he took the eighty camels.

I remained in the desert for three days, a caravan passed, and I was brought back to Baghdad, where I was reduced to asking for alms, and I made it a rule that each time someone would give me gold, I would stop the person who would have done me this favor and have him slap me so as to remind me, etc.

The caliph, [now] informed, [awarded] him an income of four silver coins per day, on condition that he would no longer ask for alms.

[SIDI NUMAN]

The young man was brought [before the caliph]. He had difficulty telling his story, [was] compelled to do so.

Lord, [he] said, I had an income to live at ease, and I had gotten married.

When we were at the table, my wife would not eat anything but a few grains of rice, so little that it could have fit onto a very small spoon. I did everything I could, etc.

One night when we were sleeping together, I realized that she got up and dressed without making any noise. I pretended to sleep, got up, followed her.

She left the house and went to the cemetery. With the help of a *goulah* [from Arabic *ghūla*, a cannibal demon], she removed the soil from a grave where a dead person had been buried the same day; she ate the flesh of the corpse, etc.

When I saw that she wanted to return to the house, I preceded her and went back to bed.

The next day, as she did not want to eat anything but rice in her usual manner, I told her that it was certainly better to eat good meat than the flesh of dead bodies.

Her face changed, she went into a fury with her eyes protruding from her head, etc. She took water [that she had] prepared and cast it in my face while uttering charms.

I was transformed into a dog. She took a stick and, after having almost beaten me to death, she opened the door to the street, and it almost crushed me when I passed through.

I escaped to a seller of sheep’s heads after having been strongly tormented by the dogs of the neighborhood.

My master, who had a bad temper, after having stayed with him for a day, mistreated me so badly that I escaped from his home to that of a baker.

The baker treated me with utmost kindness, and I did not leave him, etc.

A woman who had come to buy some bread tried to give counterfeit money to the baker, and when she denied it, the baker turned to me. He showed me the money, and I indicated with a sign that it was counterfeit.

News of my judgment spread, and in order to see for themselves, everybody hastened to come from the farthest quarters of the city to buy bread from my master, who could hardly furnish enough, and who got rich by these means.

A woman who came looked at me more attentively than the others and in a manner that made me believe that she knew I was not a dog like the others. I slipped away and followed her to her home.

She had me meet her daughter, who was a magician and who knew my disgrace. She cast some water at me, etc., and I became a man again.

She gave me some water in a vessel, and she gave me water, telling me to cast it at my wife before she looked at me. I cast it at her, uttering the words that she had taught me, and she was transformed into a mare.

Don’t I have the right, etc.

The caliph recommended to him to spare her, etc.

[THE POOR ROPEMAKER]

A man [of] great wealth, for whom felicity equaled the possession of wealth, was friends with an honest man for whom felicity equaled virtue without being attached to wealth any more than necessary for one’s livelihood. The latter was called Saad, and the former Saadi.

They had long disputes with each other, with each one defending his attitude.

In the end, Saadi claimed that the poor were poor only because they had been born poor: or, if they had been born wealthy, they had lost it all, and with a little bit of money, the former and the latter could become rich, and even very rich.

Saad found that very questionable. He said that it might happen that, even without any money, it could nevertheless happen that a man acquired great wealth.

Saadi offered to provide proof of his opinion.

When they were walking in one of the somewhat remote quarters of Baghdad, they noticed a poorly clothed ropemaker who had some hemp in front of him and was making a small rope by walking backward, etc.

Saad suggested to Saadi to address him, etc. Saadi, after having asked his name, which was Hassan, asked about what he might have [with respect to wealth], or earn [for a living]. He had a wife and four or five children whom he could hardly feed, etc. After asking several other questions about his condition, he gave him two hundred gold coins, etc.

Hassan thanked him and was quite embarrassed when he had that money about where to put it. He hid it in his turban, as all the poor people do, after having taken [out] ten coins.

With part of the money he bought hemp, and with the other, for the expenses of his small house he went to the butcher shop and he bought some meat.

While bringing it back home, as he carried it in his hands, a red kite, etc., swooped down at the meat to take it, and it would have taken it had it been smaller and had Hassan not held it so tightly. In his surprise, however, and due to Hassan’s effort, his turban fell from his head. As he had stepped aside from the turban while fending off the kite, the kite finally let go, and, rushing toward the turban that it took away, Hassan cried out. Everybody gathered, particularly the small children who laughed about such a strange event, and who laughed even more, they and all the others who were present, when they had heard Hassan say in tears that there had been 190 gold coins inside his turban, etc.

Arriving back home, he laments his loss, etc. His wife does not want to believe him herself upon learning from him that there had been 190 gold coins, etc.

He is obliged to work in his profession and to live as poorly as before.

Five or six months later, Saad and Saadi meet each other in Hassan’s neighborhood. Saad suggests they go and see what he has made out of the two hundred *séquins*, etc. They find him busy making rope, etc. Saadi can’t believe that the kite took Hassan’s turban […] to hide, etc. He gives him another two hundred *séquins*.

He takes ten to buy hemp, wraps the rest in cloth, and, having thought about it carefully, he hides it in a great earthen pot full of bran. He goes to buy hemp, etc.

A seller of clay that women use for washing [in the public baths] appears and calls out his clay for sale. Hassan’s wife calls the seller, exchanges the bran for the clay, etc.

Upon his return, Hassan no longer finds the pot of bran, laments, complains to his wife, they do not know where the seller of clay lives.

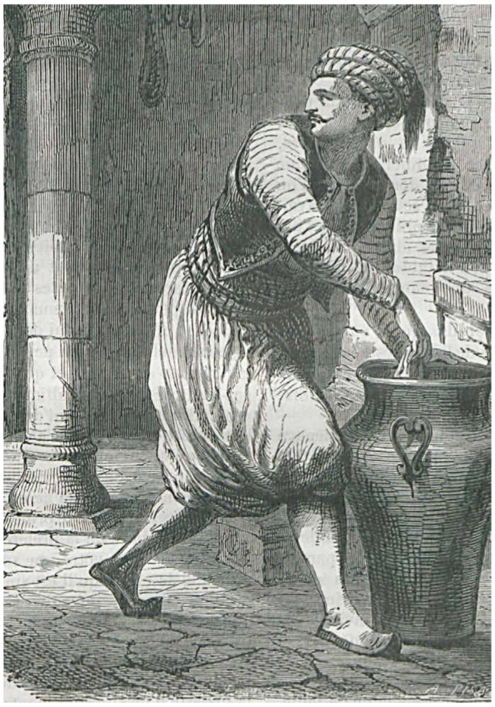
Hassan is forced to gain his livelihood as before, without being able to make any progress, etc.

Saad and Saadi, about six months later, again pass by and find Hassan at the same place. Saadi can’t believe that Hassan lost the money the way he did. And he does not want to give him any more.

Saad tells him that he sees well by experience that with money one would not always become rich.

Let us see, Saadi, if you cannot make him become rich without any money, etc. Saad finds a piece of lead he had with him. Saadi mocks him, etc.

Hassan haughtily puts it into his bosom; at night, when taking off his belt to go to sleep, the lead falls, and he haughtily throws it into a corner.



Hassan hid the coins in a pot of bran. Detail from the 1882 edition of Les mille et une nuits *by Antoine Galland.*

A fisherman who lived in the neighborhood, and who wanted to go fishing at three o’clock in the morning, noticed while preparing his nets that he was missing a lead weight. Since the shops are closed, he sends his wife to the neighbors, etc. She returns without finding any. He asks her whether she had been at Hassan’s house, etc., she gives reasons, etc., for not going there. She goes there very late, etc. They are sleeping, she asks for lead. The husband feels around for it, finds it, and gives it to his wife, who gets up and gives it to the woman, opening [the door], and the woman promises in compensation the first catch from her husband’s net. The fisherman is happy about the lead, etc., and confirms her promise, attaches the lead, and he sets out.

With the first casting of his net, he catches a single fish, but big and extraordinary. He sets it to the side and continues. He then catches more, but not one so beautiful. As soon as he is back, he sends it to Hassan through his wife, great gratitude, etc.

Hassan’s family is perplexed about what to do with it, there is not even a grill. Hasan leaves this to his wife to arrange, his wife cleans [the fish] in the evening, she finds in its belly a large diamond that emits light that she takes to be glass. When night has fallen, the light shines even brighter. The children make a racket, arguing about who will have it, and, admiring it, shouting out. Hassan and his wife, also astonished, let them go on about it. The light is so bright that they can even do without a lamp.

This racket lasts throughout the night and interrupts the sleep of a Jewish jeweler and his family, their neighbor, who is separated by a single wall of woodwork and light masonry. The next morning, the Jew sends his wife to complain. Hassan's wife has her understand where the racket was coming from [i.e., why they had made so much noise], she shows her the diamond that she took for a piece of glass, as did Hassan and the children. The Jew's wife, who recognized it was a diamond and who knew its price, went to inform her husband, who sent her to buy it at whatever price it would be. The children at first opposed the sale and firmly rejected the twenty gold coins that were offered. She offered more. The husband who saw her eagerness said that he would not give it for [any amount whatsoever], etc. She goes back to her husband, who comes and who sees the glass himself. The deal is concluded at a hundred thousand gold coins. The Jew, who was sure to make a good deal, finds money from his friends, in addition to the money he had at hand. He counts the money, and the diamond is delivered to him.

[The ropemaker] buries the money, and following the advice of his wife, he improves his position little by little, he opens a shop, starts to trade, step by step, etc. Finally, he builds a magnificent house and establishes the biggest business in Baghdad, etc.

Eighteen months later, [when] Saad and Saadi pass through the neighborhood, they are astonished, particularly Saadi, not to find Hassan. They ask around, they learn what he has become and even where he lives. Saadi claims that he has made use of his money, etc. Saad, to the contrary, claims that it was the piece of lead, etc.

They visit him, they find a doorman, slaves, a great court, they are invited inside.

Khogia Hassan, now known under that name, recognizes them, embraces them, and regales them. They delight in his company, and while the meal is being prepared, he starts by thanking Saad, etc., and relates the events as they had happened. Saadi can't believe it, Khogia Hassan assures him. They dine, after lunch they want to leave, they are asked to stay for dinner: feasting, music, dance, etc.

They go to sleep, and the next day Khogia Hassan takes them to his country house, where he again regales them. Two of Khogia Hassan's sons, the youngest ones, discover a bird's nest on a tree, through the cries of the little ones; they have a slave climb up, [and he] finds the nest at the top of the trunk, where the branches part, etc., and in the nest was Khogia Hassan's turban. The nest is brought to him, he recognizes his turban, Saadi at first cannot believe it, but the 190 gold coins that are found there are the proof.

They return to the city to Khogia Hassan's house. They do not find barley to give to the horses, it is too far to go and fetch some from the square where the shops were; they find bran in a neighboring shop, it was in a vessel. They take the vessel and give some of the bran to the horses. They come back and find that they do not eat it; they inform Khogia Hassan, who gives orders to spread it out. They spread it out and find a piece of cloth where there are 190 *séquins*. They take it to Hassan, who shows Saadi that he had spoken the truth, etc., and that he could see that all his good fortune truly came from Saad's piece of lead, etc.

THE STORY OF THE JEALOUS SISTERS

If any of the tales told by Diyab to Galland derived from the European fairy-tale tradition and the writings of Giovanni Straparola—a highly contested proposition—the likeliest candidate appears to be "The Story of the Jealous Sisters."[3] *It is striking that Diyab had already heard the tale set in Persia—or, if he heard it in Italian or French in a European setting, he chose to adapt the tale to his favored fairy-tale realm of Persia. That the sultan of Persia is described as venturing out in disguise for his nightly wanderings only strengthens the perception of a storyteller seeking to emphasize the connection to the* One Thousand and One Nights *and its core tales featuring Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Diyab's predilection for these tales is evident from his choice to relate "The Night Adventures of Harun al-Rashid" for Galland, already embedding tales within that frame in the manner of that other Harun tale, "The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad."*

Galland's hand and note-taking from Diyab's storytelling for this particular tale changes perceptibly. As his biographer Mohamed Abdel-Halim has noted, Galland begins by taking down complete sentences, and by the end the notes have broken down to the point of sounding like a list of characters and events, not even complete phrases. For him, this is a sign of the French author's ambition not only to jot down the overall notions and developments of the tales but also to record details and objects for later recollection and expansion. He imagines that Galland must have written these notes in his diary when he came home from meeting Diyab, and then rushed when he found he did not have the time or ability to finish in clear, complete sentences. Having held the pocket diary, the size of a small moleskin notebook, in my hands at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, I'm inclined to think that Galland had his diary with him whenever he met Diyab (unfortunately, most entries are vague on where these meetings took place). The change in handwriting and the *breakdown in sentence structure are as likely the result of a failure to keep up with the young Syrian’s narration. This observation accords with the findings of Ruth Bottigheimer, based on a reading of the cross-outs and mistakes made in the annotations, which she argues reveal a listener seeking to keep pace with a storyteller speaking in French.*

It is worth noting that the magical objects again appear unadorned in Diyab’s telling—the golden water, the talking bird, and the singing tree—and it was likely Galland who attributed “a richness of color” to them to help his Parisian reader understand why the brothers would risk their lives to obtain them, as Abdel-Halim has noted.

WHEN A [SULTAN] of Persia named Khosrow Shah was yet but a prince, he took great pleasure in nocturnal adventures, and it is for this reason that he would often disguise himself in order to more successfully satisfy his inclination. He had no sooner succeeded the sultan his father, who died at a very old age, than he had no trouble making this into a duty.

One evening, as he was strolling through the streets in disguise, passing through a street, some noise that he heard obliged him to stop at a door. As he saw light through a door, he saw three young women sitting on a sofa who were talking loud enough to be overheard.

He listened and heard the eldest saying: As we are talking about wishes, mine would be to be married to the sultan's baker so as to eat from that bread that they call the sultan's bread, etc.

The second sister said, and I, my wish would be to be the wife of the sultan's master chef, I would eat excellent stews.

The youngest, who was a great beauty and quite witty, said: As for me, I would wish to be the sultan's wife, I would give him a prince who would have golden hair on one side, and silver [hair] on the other, whose tears would be pearls, and who would not laugh a single time without rosebuds breaking into blossom.

The sultan Khosrow Shah ordered his grand vizier to remember the house well, and to bring him the three sisters the next day.

The grand vizier brought them, and the three sisters when questioned took a long time to explain themselves. They repeated the same things, [and] the sultan married the eldest one to the baker, the master chef to the second, and married the youngest one [himself] the same day, not without a great jealousy from the other two sisters.

The sultan's wife became pregnant, and when she was ready to give birth, the sultan wanted to give her a midwife. The two sisters offered themselves and they begged him not to deprive them of rendering this service to the queen, their sister, and the queen who was not suspicious wished for it herself.

She gives birth to a prince; the two sisters wrap him in swaddling clothes, place him in a basket, and abandon him on a canal of running water at the side of the Jordan River, and in the meantime they produce a little dog, as if the queen had given birth to it. In his rage, the sultan wants to punish his wife; the grand vizier and the other ministers dissuade him. The child in the basket was found by the steward of the sultan's gardens, who had no children; he took [the child] with him and nourished it, thinking that one of the queen's maids or the sultan's favorites had abandoned it.

The sultan's wife gave birth to a second son. The two envious sisters replace [it with] a cat and abandon the little prince as [they had abandoned] the elder one. The steward of the gardens finds him and raises him as [he did with] the first one. Rage of the sultan dies down.

The sultan's wife gives birth to a princess. Her sisters replace [the girl with] a misshapen piece of meat[4] and abandon the princess [in the same manner] as the two princes. She is saved, like them, by the steward, who raises her with her brothers. The sultan wanted to put his wife to death, he is appeased, and he contents himself with having a small wooden shed built for her close to the mosque, and he has her imprisoned there, ordering all those who would pass by to enter the mosque to spit in her face under threat of the same punishment. The order is executed to the great contentment of the two envious sisters.

The steward of the gardens raises the two princes and the princess together as his own children, and they acknowledge him as their father. He gives them tutors to teach them how to read and write, the sciences, and at the same time to the princess, etc. He gives other masters to the princes for physical education. The princess even learns to ride horseback with them, to throw a spear, and she also learns to play all sorts of instruments.

The steward of the gardens, who loved them, etc., had a magnificent house built for them some distance from the city, where he stayed with them so that it would be completed and furnished.

He dies, and the princes stay in the same palace together with the princess, content about their lot and the abundant goods that had been left to them.

One day when the two princes were out hunting, an old pious Muslim woman presents herself at the door, asking to be let in to perform her prayers, for it was time. They inform the princess, who gives orders to let her enter. When she had performed her prayers, she looks around in the house, etc. She finds the princess, who treats her with great respect, etc.

The pious woman tells her that the house is magnificent, etc., but it was missing three things that would succeed in making it incomparable. The talking bird called Bulbul Hezaz,[5] who attracts all other songbirds; the singing tree; and the golden water. All of the tree's leaves sing, and a little of the golden water in a basin bursts up into the air and falls down again as if it were pushed, etc. She tells her where to go in order to find, etc.

At their return, the two brothers find the princess sad: She is hardly able to explain the reason; she explains herself and the eldest one sets out.

Before leaving, he gives her a knife with the sheath and asks her to pull the knife from the sheath each day during his absence, explaining to her that she could be sure of his death when she would see a drop of blood fall from it. He sets out on his way, etc.

After traveling a long way to the far sides of India, he meets a dervish who was so old that his eyebrows reached his nose, his mustache covered his mouth, and his beard reached his feet. Long hair and nails, etc. The prince approaches him, greets him; he could hardly hear him speak. He takes scissors, a razor, etc. The dervish appears rejuvenated.

He asks the prince where he is going. The prince tells him. Great difficulty, according to the dervish, who dissuades him as much as he can by depicting the danger. He pressures him so strongly that the dervish says to him: Since you are intent, pray take this ball, upon giving it to him. When you are seated on your horse, throw it in front of you and follow it until it stops at the foot of a mountain.

You will see there that the ground is covered with big black stones and you will hear, without seeing anything, a great noise of voices shouting, arrest him, capture him, kill him, do not let him pass, follow him, etc. If you turn your head, you will immediately be transformed into a black stone.

If you climb up to the top of the mountain, you will find a cage, and in the cage [is] the bird you are looking for. [But the bird will say, etc.] The bird will speak and will inform you where the tree and the golden water are, etc.

The prince mounts his horse, follows the ball, and he arrives at the foot of the mountain. He dismounts and climbs up [the mountain]; he hears the voices, etc. Fright overwhelms him, etc. He turns his head, and he is transformed into a black stone.

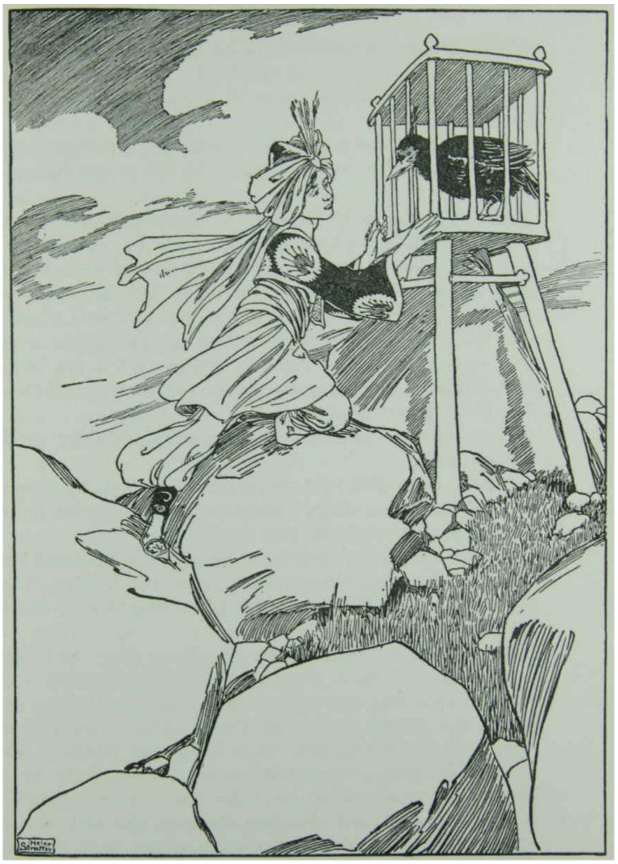
The princess, when pulling out the knife that day, sees the drop of blood, etc.

She informs the younger prince about it [and he] undertakes the same voyage after having left a string of prayer beads with the princess, etc.

He takes the same road, he finds the same dervish whom he flatters. The dervish dissuades him, he insists. He tells him what he has to do, he arrives at the foot of the mountain, and while climbing, the same thing happens to him as to his brother.

The princess, when trying to move the prayer beads that day, finds the beads so strongly stuck together, etc.

She dresses in a man’s clothes, she mounts her horse, she finds the same dervish, etc., to whom she offers the same kindness. The dervish, in order to dissuade her, tells her about the two young princes, and he dissuades her even more forcefully because she is young and because it even seems to him that she is a woman and that she is their sister. With great discontent, he gives her the same instructions.



The bird informs Parizade that he is her slave. Illustration by Helen Stratton, from The Arabian Nights, *retold by Gladys Davidson (1912).*

She mounts her horse, throws the ball in front of her, she follows it and climbs the mountain without getting frightened by all the noise and without turning her head; the closer she approaches, the more the bluster increases. They address invectives at her as if to a woman. Even the bird participates, insulting her with words with an astonishingly loud voice [more than (one would have expected in relation to) his size], she sees the cage, she makes it all the way there.

She takes the cage. The bird calms down and praises her as she deserves, tells her that he knows well who she is and that he is her slave, and that she only has to ask for whatever she wants.

She asks him where the golden water is. He informs her, and she takes some and puts it in a small silver flask with which she had furnished herself.

She asks him about the tree that was very large, she says that she cannot take it along. The bird responds that a very small branch will suffice, etc.

The princess tells the bird that this will not suffice, and that she insists on taking her two brothers with her, he argues against it. Bird, you are my slave and your life is in my hands.

I cannot refuse you anything, says the bird, etc. He shows her an earthenware bottle filled with water. Take, he said, this bottle and disperse the water on the black stones. This will be the means to find the two brothers whom you are looking for.

The princess cast the water and all the black stones transformed themselves into the same number of men. She recognized her two brothers [and] she asked them what they were doing there, where they were, and they responded that they had just been sleeping, etc. She shows them the bird, etc.

All the other princes, as many as there were, thanked their benefactor and liberator. They returned by horse and the princess returned home; they thanked the dervish whom they found dead on their way [home], as if, etc.

When they returned, the princess placed the cage in the parlor of the house and all the birds from all over came to accompany his chanting: the canaries, nightingales, siskins, goldfinches, etc.

She planted the branch of the singing tree that became a large tree in a short time.

She put the golden water into the basin after having had it emptied. The water spread and filled the whole basin, rose up, etc., and made one of the most surprising spectacles.

The two princes were out hunting in the same area where the sultan would hunt. They could not avoid meeting him. The sultan, surprised to see such well-groomed young men, informed himself about them, etc., and they lived up to his expectations; they hunted in his presence and earned his admiration. The sultan felt an inclination toward them [and] invited them to visit him in his palace; they apologized, saying they first had to consult their sister.

The next day, finding themselves hunting again, they had forgotten to ask; they forgot again a second time.

The third time, [the sultan], who loved them more and more, put three small golden balls into the bosom of the eldest [brother] so that, when going to sleep at night, they would remind him by falling out. The balls had their effect in the evening, that very evening they talked about it with their sister. The sister consulted Bulbul Hezar, who approved of them going, in addition remarking that they would do well to invite the sultan in return.

The brothers return to the hunt the next day. The sultan takes them with him, they are admired in the city. The sultan has a magnificent meal prepared for them, female dancers, skillful tricks, dances, instruments, concerts, etc. When leaving, they invite the sultan for the next day.

Hunting the next day. The princes and the sister consult the talking bird. He is committed [to helping them], he tells them about a place where one finds a large number of pearls, and he orders them to prepare a dish of cucumbers or squash stuffed with them [i.e., the pearls] for the sultan. [When t]hey ask him the reason, he says that they should do what he said, etc.

The princes find themselves hunting with Sultan Khosrow Shah, they take him to their castle, he is received by the sister, he admires the singing tree and the marvelous effect of the golden water.

They sit down at the table, etc. The sultan is surprised when trying to serve himself some of the squash dish, he expresses his astonishment. He cannot refrain from asking what is the meaning of this?

The talking bird speaks up: Sire, you marvel at pearl stuffing, without being surprised that a woman gives birth to a dog, a cat, and a piece of wood.

Yes, responds the sultan, and yet this is what happened to my wife.

Sire, says the talking bird, what you see is easier than to make you believe what was impossible. The two brothers whom you see have no other father but Your Majesty, together with their sister. The steward of your gardens saved their lives, the two sisters of the princess will tell you the rest.

Astonishment of the sultan, pleasant surprise of the two princes and the princess, embraces.

The sultan returns to his palace, sends someone to seize the two sisters, has them tortured, they confess their crime, out of jealousy. They are torn to pieces by four horses.

The sultan himself goes to free his wife, the sultana, he makes amends. After she changed her dress, he takes her to the house of the steward of the gardens, she embraces her children. Her children, etc.

Magnificent entry into the city up to the palace, celebrations, marriage of the brothers and the sister, the princes' country estate, they keep the talking bird, etc. The eldest prince, Bahram [Bahrām], the youngest, Perviz [Parviz], the princess Parizade [Parizād], the sultan's wife, etc.

ALI KHAWAJA, MERCHANT OF BAGHDAD

If The Thousand and One Nights *is a "mirror for merchants" (as Aboubakr Chraïbi contends), it is easy to see why Diyab, knowing Galland needed more tales for his translation, told this tale, and why Galland included it in his collection. Those approaching the* Arabian Nights *with the expectation of reading horror, fantasy, or fairy tales will be disappointed that this story is completely devoid of magic. It is a variation on a common story motif of the merchant who is swindled out of a treasure entrusted to a friend, and who must in turn perform a trick to regain it. But the pleasure of the original cycle of the tales in Arabic consists greatly in the variety of genres, which attest to Shahrazad's virtuosity as a storyteller and the richness of Middle Arabic literature. Notable among these is early evidence of the detective story in "The Story of the Three Apples," and it is in the work of detection that the tale of Ali Khawaja yields its pleasure.*

IN THE CITY of Baghdad, Ali Khogia [ʿAlī Khojā], modest merchant, without wife, without children, who lived by himself in his parents' house, had a dream three days in a row that urged him to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca.

He sells all of his shop, all of his furniture, etc., rents his house, keeps what he deems necessary for the voyage, and puts 1,000 *séquins* into a vessel that he covers with olives on top, and goes to see a merchant, his friend, whom he asks to be so kind as to keep it until his return from Mecca. The merchant tells him to carry it himself to the storeroom and to put it where he would like.

Ali Khogia sets out with a caravan. He does some business in Mecca, he finds an opportunity to travel to Egypt, from Egypt to Damascus, from Damascus to Persia, to India.

About six years later, as the merchant was dining with his wife one evening, they started to talk about olives. He remembered those of Ali Khogia, told his wife about them, etc. His wife said that it was entrusted to them, that they should not touch it.

I have to see what it is, says the husband.

His wife does not agree, etc.

He takes a lamp with a plate, goes to the storeroom, and in taking the olives out, he also takes some gold coins. He does not bother about the olives, which were spoiled, he puts them back into the vessel with the coins, etc. He comes back up [from the cellar] and says that the olives are spoiled.

The next day he goes to the storeroom, he throws away the bad olives, takes the thousand gold coins, fills the vessel with other olives harvested that year, seals it, etc.

Ali Khogia returns from India via Persia, and from Persia he arrives in Baghdad. He stays in a khan, and the next day he goes to see his friend, who tells him that the pot of olives is still in the same place, that he has not touched it, and that he [Ali] only has to take it back. He carries the pot to his house, and he finds nothing but olives.

He returns to his friend, who denies [having touched it], he threatens him with justice, and he is forced to take him to court. No witnesses, the friend is sent back acquitted.

Ali Khogia presents a petition to the caliph at a market. The caliph sends the parties back home.

The same evening at night, [the caliph,] disguised as a merchant, together with Masrur and Jaafar, he hears a noise and goes straight toward that noise.

There were ten or twelve children from the neighborhood who were playing. They found a place to sit down, they sit down, and they watch them play and entertain themselves by seeing those, etc. Among other games, they played that of qadi [judge]. One of them was seated as a qadi, they brought other children to be judged.

In the end, as Ali Khogia’s affair had spread, they bring a merchant accused of having stolen a pot in which there were a thousand *séquins*. After all formalities, etc., the child judge requested that the pot be brought before him, they pretended to, etc.

There, he says, olives that still appear to be good, after seven years. Have a gardener brought forth! Gardener, how old can these olives be?

Sire, they are from last year, [if not] they would all be spoiled, etc.

The caliph admires, etc. He charged the grand vizier to find out where [the child judge] lived. I want, says he, him to [reenact] the affair before me tomorrow.

The grand vizier followed, etc., came the following day. The mother alarmed, etc. The vizier reassures her.

When the child is before the caliph, the caliph says that he wants him to judge. The parties are called, and he proceeds in the same manner as the previous day. The pot of olives is brought forth, and the olives are inspected by a gardener. The gardener, etc. The merchant sentenced to be hanged. The child rewarded, etc.

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1. *Translator's note:* The *bedesten* denotes a specific kind of market, usually a covered market of valuable merchandise.

2. *Translator's note:* The *séquin* (Italian *zecchino*) is a gold coin minted by the Republic of Venice from the thirteenth century onward that circulated widely in the Levant.

3. *Editor's note:* Ruth Bottigheimer makes this case; however, Aboubakr Chraïbi, Ulrich Marzolph, and Robert Irwin remain unpersuaded. (See Irwin, "Afterword.")

4. *Translator's note:* The French term used, *une mole*, denotes a deformed fetus or uterine mass.

5. *Translator's note:* The *bulbul* (Persian *bolbol*) is a nightingale. *Hezaz* is obviously misunderstood (or misspelled) for (Persian) *hezār* (a thousand), as a marvelous bird in similar circumstances would be qualified as singing a thousand different melodies.

HANNA DIYAB TALES NOT INCLUDED BY GALLAND IN THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

THE CITY OF GOLD

(WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1709)

*The story of a princess promised to the suitor who can answer a riddle, with the unsuccessful suitors put to death, is best known to European audiences in the version collected by the Grimm brothers, "The Worn-Out Dancing Shoes." In that story, a poor soldier solves the riddle of the shoes danced to shreds by twelve sisters kept under lock and key by their father the king, correctly surmising that they escape through an underground passageway and then by boat to an island castle, where they dance all night with the same number of princes. Maria Tatar observes that while "the princesses in the Grimms' tale seem to enjoy their nightly escapades, their counterparts in other versions of the tale seem beholden to a dark spirit from the nether regions, who compels them to dance on a nightly basis" (p. 330). While in other versions, the spell's compulsion would seem to excuse the princesses' conduct, the princess in Diyab's tale is the magician, and for this she must be punished, as Ulrich Marzolph observes. If, as seems likely, dancing in the Grimms' tale is a synonym for sex, then "The City of Gold" emerges as a possible precursor of the more famous Grimm version (*101 Middle Eastern Tales, *pp. 54–57).*

In a key respect, this neglected tale answers scholars who have been quick to assign the work of characterization and interiority in the tales added in French to the Arabian Nights *to the translator Galland rather than to the storyteller Diyab. The third prince in Diyab's tale succeeds where his brothers have failed, because he has "a more open, more lively, and more penetrating mind than those of his two elder brothers." Understanding that his father would never permit him to journey beyond the kingdom to satisfy his desire for adventure, he is careful to dissimulate and secretly make his preparations to leave. This same gift for dissimulation also spares him from his brothers' fate when confronted with the princess's riddle of the location of the City of Gold.*

A KING had three sons.

In order to have them educated in the sciences and the fine arts, he had a special palace built for them whose windows were of a kind of crystal that let in the light of day through which, however, one could not see any object outside.

In addition to others, they had a very skilled teacher who educated them in all kinds of sciences, who never abandoned them, and a single woman who brought them food, but who took great care never to serve them any meat with bones.

At the age of fourteen or fifteen years, by mistake they were served meat with a bone. The three princes, who had never seen one, looked at it with great attention; after having carefully considered it, the last one who held it in his hand threw it against a window, and it made a hole. They rose from the table and approached the hole, and looking through it they noticed, etc.

They did not want to eat or take any lessons from their teacher, etc.

The king is obliged to let them go out, and to have the sheikh [i.e., their teacher] accompany them, in order to walk around inside and outside of the city.

They pass before a certain place where some people were drinking certain hot and refreshing drinks; they ask what it was. The teacher enters with them; they serve them different liquors, and as they were dancing there, they took great pleasure in this entertainment. A dervish who had traveled a lot and who was in the same place sent them several kinds of dry and liquid jams.

They ask their teacher who that man was, etc. They talk with him about his travels, about which he gave them his account, and they desire to travel. They appear before the king in great sadness without wanting to speak. He asks their teachers, they [i.e., the sons] each declare their desire.

The king, after much resistance, permits the eldest [son] to travel alone.

* * *

HE TAKES a horse and money, etc. But before departing, he gives the king a knife that would indicate the prince's death when a drop of blood would drip from it when drawing it from its sheath.

He leaves and passes through several countries.

He arrives at a city and lodges in a khan [from Persian khān, a guesthouse for merchants]. He dresses himself properly and richly in the custom of the country.

Strolling around in the city, he approaches the palace and, as he wanted to enter, he sees next to it a good old man, wise and respectable, do everything he could to prevent him from doing so, etc. In spite of his advice, he went in.

Passing into a great chamber that he very much admired, he felt himself being taken all of a sudden. He found himself in a chamber where the daughter of the king was seated, accompanied by a hundred armed guards who held their unsheathed sabers.

The princess asked him who he was and from where he came. She told him that he would have to respond to a question that she would ask him, on which his life depended. If you satisfy [my desire], she said, you will marry me, if not I will have your head cut off [text: your neck cut], as with those that you will see.

They took him to a great hall, where he saw several heads arranged in one of the corners and their bodies beneath without being decayed. He was frightened, and he returned, and as he could not discharge himself, they brought him before the king, who said all kinds of nice things about the princess, and they wrote in his presence a promise of the proposed compensation and the promise on behalf of the prince, who signed after the king.

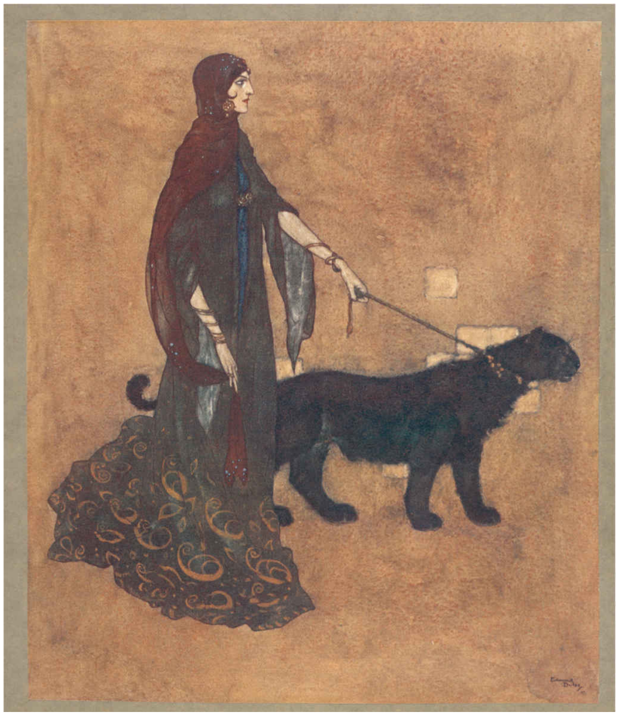


Illustration of the Queen of the Black Isles by Edmund Dulac from Stories from the Arabian Nights *(1907). Diyab's "City of Gold" has a formidable female protagonist reminiscent of* Nights *characters such as the sorceress-queen in "The Tale of the Enchanted Prince" or Queen Lab in "Julnar of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Basim."*

The princess asked him where the City of Gold was, he could not answer, they cut off his head on the square, etc.

That very day, the king his father, when pulling the knife from the sheath, saw a drop of blood fall. Great mourning.

* * *

THE SECOND PRINCE also asked the king his father to go travel to avenge the death of this elder brother.

He departs, he passes through many provinces and he arrives, etc.

The same old man gives him the same advice, he is taken; in passing through the hall, at the orders of the princess, he draws the saber and wants to throw himself at her.

They take him to the same hall where the heads and the bodies were, and they sign the reciprocal promise between the king and him.

The princess poses her question, and upon his silence, they cut off his head, etc.

Before departing, this prince had left prayer beads of a hundred grains with the king his father and had said to him that as long as he could count the grains one by one, it would indicate that he was alive; on the contrary, that when they would stick to each other, this would be a sign of his death. That day the king, who was holding the prayer beads in his hand, suddenly noticed that the grains stuck together, he gave a great cry, etc. Great mourning.

* * *

THE THIRD PRINCE who had also indicated his desire to travel, but who had a more open, more lively, and more penetrating mind than those of his two elder brothers, understood quite well that it would be the means to be detained should he ask for permission to depart.

He dissimulated, very secretly made his preparations, and left.

He comes to the same city, etc., and the same thing happens to him, to be taken and to appear before the princess.

He agreeably receives the proposition, he sees the heads and the corpses without being frightened, he signs the reciprocal agreement happily and voluntarily, and as soon as the princess had asked him where the City of Gold was, he answers without hesitation that he knew and that he would render her a good account of it.

The princess said to him that this was not enough, but that he would have to give her proof.

He asked for forty days, and the princess granted them to him, remarking nevertheless that he should not fail, all the more since she knew well where to find it. They took him out through the palace door.

He returns to the khan, he mounts his horse, and without really knowing where he was going, he went as far as Mount Caucasus.

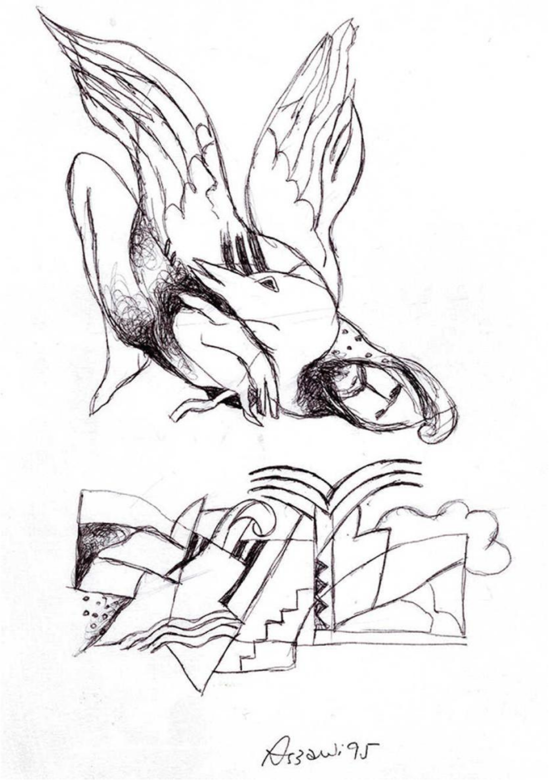
He climbs from place to place, he binds his horse to a post on a prairie, and he rests at the foot of a rock that was not very high but steep.

As he was about to fall asleep, he heard the cries of birds. He looks, and a short distance away he notices a large serpent against the rock about to devour the little rukhs [from Arabic *rukh*, a legendary giant bird] that filled the air with their cries. He gets up, goes to the serpent, and he cuts it in two in the middle of the body, and he did it again and finished it off. He returned to the same place and soon fell asleep.

The two rukhs, father and mother, arrived, they saw the serpent, and they learned from their little ones that it is the prince to whom they were obliged. It had been many years that the serpent had played the same trick on them without [their] being able to take revenge. Without awakening the prince, they approached him and supplied him shade with their wings.

Waking up, the prince was very frightened. The rukhs reassured him and asked him what they could do for him. After having indicated that he was in great [difficulties], they urged him to inform them about the thing [i.e., his trouble], indicating to him, etc. As soon as he had informed them, they told him that they knew where the City of Gold was, and that he would only have to mount one of them.

He was transported to the middle of the palace of the City of Gold, where the rukhs left him after having left him some of their feathers, telling him that he would only have to burn them when he wanted them to come and take him back. They left, he roamed around the palace, he came to the kitchen and to the pantry, where he found something to drink and eat, and revisiting the palace he notices that there were forty very spacious rooms with a beautiful bed in each of them.



Diyab's story of the City of Gold draws on the popular mythology of the rukh birds featured in several voyages of Sinbad the sailor. Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi, 1995; printed with the permission of the artist.

He hides, and he hears a great noise, and he perceives a flock of great birds numbering forty, all of them white except for a single one that was all black. They settled in a great water basin, they submerged themselves, and they came out in the shape of men, thirty-nine white, and a single black one. They went to the kitchen, and as there were provisions of all kinds, they prepared a great meal.

Toward the end of the day, the prince saw something fall into the basin like two great barrels, from which the princess whom he had seen, and who had asked him the question, emerged, with an old [female] magician. They had dinner, they danced, and the black man whose turn it was to sleep that particular night, because, etc., with the princess, took her with him, and the other thirty-nine retired, each one in their turn, with a torch.

The prince decided to take advantage, etc., doubting that the magician would sleep in the princess's chamber, found her chambers and, hearing her snore, he opened the door with the tip of a knife. He found the black man and the princess sleeping together. He knew the means to get rid of the man, and he cut off his head and put it in a sack. He took the bracelet, the necklace, from the hands and feet of the princess and left the chamber.

At the dawn of day, as there was [no] one in the kitchen, he burned the feathers that one of the rukhs had given him. The rukhs arrived, took him back. He mounted his horse and returned to the palace.

The next morning, the princess called the magician and showed her the corpse of the man without head, etc. She returned to the palace the same day.

The prince arrived two or three days later. He presented himself to the king, he showed him the head, and the princess whom the king had summoned could not fail to recognize the head or her necklace or her bracelets and other things such as the golden fruits from the trees, etc., that he had brought.

The king told him that the princess was his and in his power, and that he could even take her life in order to punish her for her misbehavior, because he had told him about the indecent acts, etc.

The guilty princess submitted herself to him.

He asked her to resuscitate the two princes, his brothers, and so many other princes, etc.

She told him that for this he would have to stab her and to rub the heads and the extremities of the body in the direction of the head [i.e., the neck] so that he could rejoin them, and they would be resuscitated.

He did not want to engage [in] this cruelty, fearing that she only wanted to deceive him.

He demanded that she submit to bloodletting. She was bled, and with the blood, etc. He took the two princes, his brothers, along after having been given presents by the king, an escort. He also took the princess along, but he put her to death on the way.

He returned to the king, his father, who saw again the three princes, his sons, whom he had not hoped to see again.

THE SULTAN OF SAMARKAND

(THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1709)

This tale can be seen as a variation on the story pattern of "The Three Stolen Princesses," with some elements familiar from stories from ancient Greece and China, as Ulrich Marzolph has noted. Diyab's version of the tale presents it in a mode suitable for the One Thousand and One Nights. *The princes read the Qur'an, the adventure is set in motion when a king inadvertently builds palaces for his three sons over the palaces of a fearsome jinni's daughters, and the youngest prince even manages, in the manner of Sinbad, to escape from a monster with the aid of a rukh. For all the presence of these familiar elements, this tale still manages to surprise with the imaginative dimensions to its world-building. The hero mounts a black bull that takes him down to an underground world "seven times deeper." When he pleads with the sultan in the great city below to return to the realm above, the bewildered sultan wants to have him burned as a heretic. Indeed, no tale combining all these elements predates Diyab's telling.*

Diyab's "Sultan of Samarkand" also yields insight into the ways in which Galland spun out the marvels in the tale of "Aladdin"—the most famous tale he received from the Syrian storyteller. Galland's biographer, Mohamed Abdel-Halim, spies an echo of the appearance in this tale of a "hideous jinni … named Morhagian" in that of the hideous jinni that scares the protagonist's mother in "Aladdin." Likewise, the palace built in massive gold and silver in "Aladdin" is reminiscent of the house built by the sultan of Samarkand for his eldest son: "covered on all sides alternately with bricks of gold and silver." Galland made reference to browsing his notes from Diyab's storytelling sessions for new stories to include in his Arabian Nights, *and it is also possible that he scavenged tales that he was not yet ready or willing to include for additional marvels to include in the French stories.*

HANNA TOLD ME the Arab tale that follows.

A sultan of Samarkand, who was already very old, called before him three princes, his sons, and, showing them that he would be most pleased to have them understand how much he loved them, he told them that he would leave them the choice of what they could most desire according to their inclination, that they would only have to speak, and he would be ready to grant it to them—on condition, however, that they would satisfy the eldest first, and that it would be the turn of the two younger ones according to their rank.

The eldest, whose name was Rostam [Rustam], asked the sultan to agree to have a small house built for him, covered on all sides alternately with bricks of gold and silver. The very same day, orders were given.

The cover of the house was not yet finished, and there was not even a single piece of furniture, when Prince Rostam asked the sultan, his father, for permission to go and sleep there. The sultan dissuaded him by telling him that first one would have to perform the *corban*,[1] etc. But the prince was of an impatience so great that he had his bed carried there, and he slept there.

While he was reading the Qur'an about midnight, the floor opened, and he saw emerge from the underground a hideous jinni, etc., named Morhagian.[2]

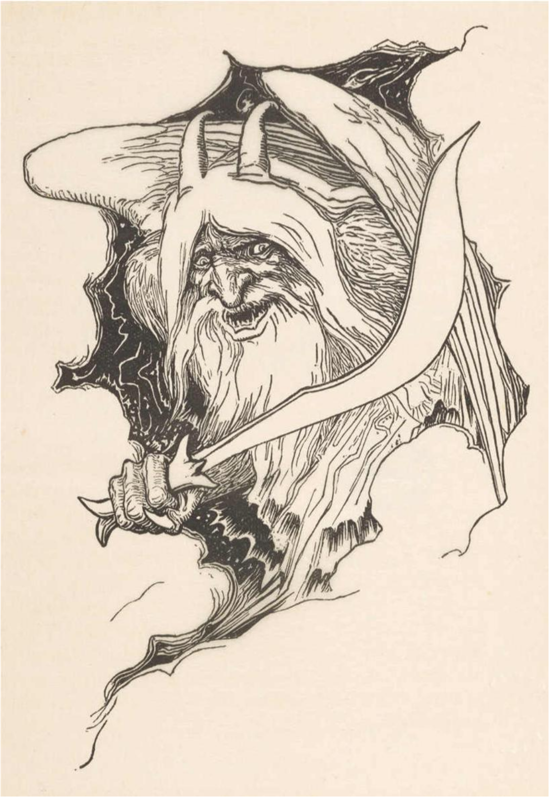
You are a prince, said he. But even if you were a sultan, I would not avenge myself any less on you for the boldness of building this house right above the palace of my eldest daughter.

At the same time, [as the jinni was] walking around the room, and hitting its walls, the entire structure was reduced to such a fine dust that the wind swept it away, and not a trace of it was left.

The prince took his saber and pursued the jinni. The jinni fled until [he reached] a well into which he threw himself, etc.

The prince appeared the next morning before the sultan in great confusion, etc.

[The next prince,] who called himself Guiath eddin [Ghiyāth al-Dīn], asked the sultan to build for him a small house only from fishbones. The sultan had it built at great expense.



The prince saw a hideous jinni emerge. Illustration by John D. Batten from Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights *(1893). Diyab's tales make extensive use of the narrative possibilities of the jinn world glimpsed in* Nights *stories such as "The Merchant and the Jinni" and "Hasan of Basra."*

Prince Guiath eddin did not have the patience for it to be completely finished, much like Prince Rostam. Despite the sultan['s advice,] he went there to sleep, with his saber next to him. The jinni Morhagian also appeared to him at midnight and paid him the same compliment by telling him that the structure was built on top of that of his second daughter—he reduced it to dust. Prince Guiath eddin pursued him, with the saber in hand, to the well, where he escaped. He saw the sultan, his father, the next morning, etc.

The third prince, named Badi’ alzaman [Badīʿ al-Zamān], received from the sultan, his father, [the permission] to have a small house built only of rock crystal. He went there when it was not yet totally finished, but without telling the sultan, quite decided to see whether Morhagian would treat him the same way, etc. Morhagian arrived at midnight and told him that his structure was built on top of the palace of his third daughter. He destroyed the building. Badi’ alzaman draws his saber, Morhagian flees, the prince wounds him three times before he arrives at the well, where he manages to escape.

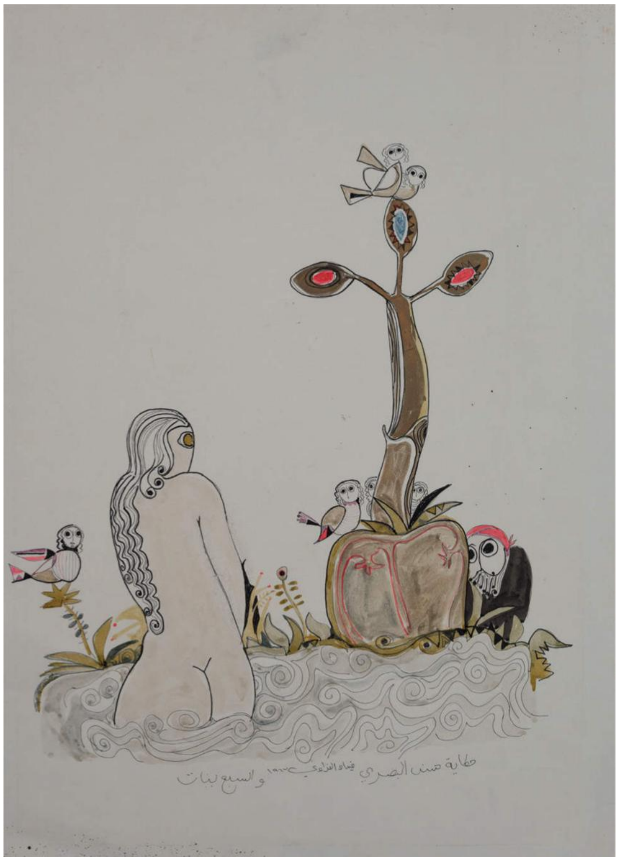
Prince Badi’ alzaman does not see the sultan but [he sees] the princes, his two brothers, and he spurs them to go look for the jinni in the well[. He] takes the two brothers along, the eldest descends attached to a rope, but when he is at a certain place he shouts and has himself pulled up and he excuses himself because of a scorching heat, etc. The same thing happens to Prince Guiath eddin, who also has himself pulled up by shouting. Prince Badi’ alzaman also lets himself be lowered, but after having given orders that they should not cease to lower him regardless of his shouts.

They lower him, he shouts, and they continue until he reaches the bottom of the well where he unfastens himself, letting the princes, his brothers, know that the air down there was very foul-smelling.

He finds an open door, he walks quite far between two walls, and at the end he finds an iron door, he opens it, and he sees a very magnificent palace. He enters, he walks around, he sees the kitchen and pantry where everything was equipped and filled with provisions, etc. He sees the chambers, and he enters into a [room] furnished with sofas, seats, etc.

Curious to see who lived there, he hides. Soon after[ward,] he sees a flock of pigeons come together at the rim of a water basin that was in the middle of the courtyard. The pigeons plunge themselves into the water, and several maids emerge from it who immediately start to occupy themselves with their particular task. One goes to the pantry, another to the kitchen, another sweeps, etc. They prepare the meal, etc.

Sometime later, Badiʾ alzaman sees another flock of ten pigeons of different colors come, with an eleventh one that was all white, and who also landed at the rim of the basin, [then] ten dove in and ten women more beautiful than the others, and better dressed, emerged from it. They take the eleventh [text: tenth] pigeon, and they plunge it into another, smaller basin that was of pink jasper, and she became a woman of very great beauty.


حكاية حسن البصري والسبع بنات
ضياء العزاوي ١٩٦٧

Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi of an episode from "Hasan of Basra" (1967); printed with the permission of the artist. Hasan opens a forbidden door to discover a garden. Ten birds alight and take off their garments of feathers—transforming themselves into ten beautiful women. Hasan falls in love with one of these jinni princesses and steals her feathers so she cannot fly away. Diyab's story of "The Sultan of Samarkand" contains an echo of this episode, which also became part of Lotte Reiniger's 1924 film The Adventures of Prince Achmed.

She was the eldest of the jinni's daughters whose name was Fattane [Fattān].

Two of the women took her under the shoulders and guided her to her chamber, followed by the others. She sat down on a small and elevated sofa, and her maids placed themselves, some at the right and some at the left, and each began their work.

Prince Badi' alzaman dropped his handkerchief. One of the maids noticed it […], and on looking [closer,] she notices him. She is frightened, and she informs Fattane. Fattane sends some of her maids to go and see.

The prince appears and presents himself before Fattane who sees a young prince. She receives him well, etc., has him sit next to her, and she asks what brings him here. He explains from beginning to end and asks where he will find the jinni on whom he wants to take revenge.

Fattane smiles and tells him to set aside this kind of talk, and to think only of enjoying himself in such a nice company. They serve the food, and she has him sit near her. They play instruments. They go to sleep.

Day after day Fattane detains the prince. The fourth [day], he definitely wants to know where he will find Morhagian.

The princess admits that it is her father and points out the extent of his power, etc. But she tells him that she cannot inform him where he could find him, but that her second sister would tell him. She has him taken to her palace, after having given him a letter through a connecting door, and presented by one of her maids.

He was introduced, he presented the letter, and he was perfectly well received. He found her younger and more beautiful than the first fairy, he implores her to tell him where he will find the jinni[. She] avoids this talk, she regales him, she leads him to discuss other subjects, and she retains him for forty days. The fortieth day she excuses herself, she sends him to her younger sister, another more beautiful fairy, and she gives him a letter.

He is received and welcomed with pleasure, she delays telling him the whereabouts of Morhagian, she also retains him for forty days.

The fortieth [text: forth] day she dissuades him; he insists, she has him understand that Morhagian will take him with one hand by the head, and with another by the feet, and that he will rip him in two right down the middle. That does not discourage him.

She [text: he] tells him the place where he will find him, that is, in a high place whose length and width would be proportional to its height.

The prince goes to show himself, and with his saber in hand he dashes towards him. Morhagian extends his hand and takes him by the head, and with the other by the foot, and rips him into two pieces with very little effort and throws him through a window facing a garden.

Two of the maids, sent there on purpose, each took a part of the prince’s body and carried it to their mistress, who gathered them, stitched them together, and resuscitated the prince by applying water on the seam [text: *couture*].[3] She asks the prince where he is from, it seems to him that he was just sleeping, she has him remember, etc.

That does not keep him from definitely wanting to kill the jinni, he refrains from eating.

The fairy explains that he is her father and that he [i.e., the prince] does not have his saber any more.

Do as you please, says the prince, he must die by my hand, etc.

The princess, after having made him promise with an oath to take her as his wife, teaches him in which manner he can take the jinni's life. She tells him that he must not hope to kill him [when he is] awake. If he sleeps, she says, you can do it, and if you hear him snore, he will even have his eyes open, indicating that he will be sleeping very sound. As he occupies all of his chamber, walk across him and go take his saber that is hanging above his head, and strike him on the neck. He will not be dead from that stroke, and on awakening, he will ask you to strike a second time. Be well on your guard not to do it, etc.

Badi' alzaman returns to Morhagian's chamber, [where] he was snoring so heavily that everything around him was shaking. The prince entered, not without trembling while walking across him. He draws the saber and with it gives him a strong strike on the neck.

Morhagian awakens, sees his murderer whom he recognizes. He curses the fairy, his daughter. Finish me, he says to the prince.

The prince says that what he just did would suffice. He leaves him and Morhagian dies.

The prince, going away with Morhagian's saber that would serve him in other encounters, notices a horse of great beauty in the stables, superb, etc. He returns to the fairy to whom he narrates what he just did. He indicates to her the desire he has to take along the horse, and what difficulties he sees in the execution [of his desire].

That is not so difficult, she says. Go, says she, cut some hair from its tail, and keep it. In a situation when you will need it, you will burn some strands of this hair and it will immediately be [there] with you, etc.

The three fairies gather together, the prince undertakes to ensure that the two princes, his brothers, will marry the other two sisters, etc. Each fairy reduces her palace into a single, small ball, and they [each] give the ball to the prince.

The prince along with the three fairies comes to the place where the well was.

The sultan, his father, had thought him dead, and he was in mourning, etc. The two princes, his brothers, had often come to the well and they were there at that moment: he made himself heard, tells them what he had done, and indicates that he was bringing the three fairies.

He asks for a rope, attaches the eldest fairy, and telling them to pull. Prince Rostam, he says, I am sending you your good luck.

The rope comes back and he does the same with the second fairy. Guiath eddin, my brother, pull, here is your good luck too.

The third fairy that Badi’ alzaman was supposed to marry wanted the prince to be pulled up first, she tells him the reason why, he dismissed this suspicion, etc. As soon as she was high enough to be seen, the two princes started to argue between themselves about who would have her. The fairy, addressing Badi’ alzaman: Prince, had I not foreseen this?

The princes had to submit themselves to what the sultan would decide.

When the third fairy had been pulled out of the well, the three fairies [text: brothers] united in requesting them to pull out their younger brother, etc. They [the brothers] forced them to follow them: while they were leading away the youngest [fairy], the two others asked permission to bid farewell to Prince Badi’ alzaman.

They shouted to him from the top of the well. Prince, have patience until Friday. You will see six oxen pass, three red, and three black. Mount one of the red ones, it will bring you to the ground. Take good care not to mount a black one, it will take you away to another underground world seven times deeper.

The princes took the three fairies away.

Friday, three days later, the six oxen appear. The prince tries to mount a red one, a black one prevents him from doing so, and he is obliged to mount on this black one that transports him, penetrating the ground, to another land where he stops close to a great city.

He enters the city and lodges with an old woman to whom he gives a gold coin in order to prepare something to eat for him, as he is terribly famished. After having eaten well, he asks for something to drink: You must not be from this country, etc. She brings him a sponge, telling him that she does not have any other water.

She tells him that an abundant spring was blocked by an animal to whom a young girl is exposed to be devoured each Friday; that this day the princess, daughter of the sultan, would be exposed, and while the animal would devour her upon leaving its hole, water would come forth until the next Friday, and that everyone would take provisions, and she says that the princess was already being exposed.

He asks the old woman to show him the place, at that moment she [is so frightened that she] even had difficulty going out of her house to show him where to go. He leaves the city and approaches.

The princess signals to him from afar not to get any closer and the more he approaches, etc. He tells her not to fear, he falls asleep sitting near her while waiting; after having implored her to wake him up as soon as, etc.

At the moment the animal appears, a tear of the princess falls on the face of the prince, who wakes up. He sees the animal[,…] he kills it with Morhagian’s saber, and the water flows in abundance.

The princess thanks her liberator and asks him to take her to the sultan, her father, who would show him his gratitude. He excuses himself, the princess marks his shoulder with blood from the animal without him noticing.

The princess returns to the city, and she is led to the palace. She recounts to the sultan, etc. She tells [him] what she did.

The sultan orders under pain of death that all men in the city should pass before him and before the princess. Badi’ alzaman who had hidden himself in a khan is forced to come. The princess recognizes him and throws an apple to indicate that it is him.

He is taken and presented before the sultan, etc. The sultan asks him what he can do [for him in exchange] for his service. The prince hesitates, finally he asks him to show him the means to return to the other world from where he came. The sultan would have had him burned, etc., as a heretic, etc. He treats him as a fool and chases him away in disgrace.

He goes away without knowing where he was going.

Approaching a rocky mountain he sees a big serpent climbing up so as to eat the little rukhs, he kills the serpent with Morhagian’s saber.

The father and the mother of the rukhs [arrive] as he has just finished the execution. They invite him to ask for whatever he wants.

After hesitating, he asks for the way to return to the upper world. The male tells him [to prepare] quarters of a sheep, to take them carefully and then mount on his back, informing him to give him some of this meat every time he would turn his head as they travel, to this or to the other side, etc.

The prince mounts on the rukh’s back, the rukh stamps with his foot, the ground opens up continuously where he appears. He arrives beneath the well where the rukh turns his head, no more meat remained. The prince cuts the fat from his leg and gives it to him. The rukh arrives at the top of the well. The prince sets foot on the ground. The rukh notices, etc. The prince tells him[…]. He [the rukh] regurgitates the flesh from the leg and applies it to its place. It reattaches, and the prince is immediately cured.

Leaving the well, the prince meets a peasant, changes clothes with him, keeps the saber, the three balls, and the hair of the horse.

He enters the city and lodges with a tailor who gives him shelter. Gradually, the prince is considered [a tailor] by demonstrating that he knows how to sew, etc.

Preparations are made for the marriage of Prince Rostam, the clothes for the fairy are made by the tailor. Badi’ alzaman, [text: Rostam] who slept in the shop, pulls from one of the balls [that the fairies had given him] clothes similar to the ones that had been prepared and puts them in the place of the other ones, etc. The surprised tailor wants to take him along so that he can receive the compensation, he turns him down, etc., and excuses himself by saying that he has just arrived, etc.

The fairies take it as a good omen when they see the clothes.

The marriage is completed, and they play a game of *girit*,[4] etc. A great gathering, the shops are closed, the tailor wants to take the prince to the spectacle, he excuses himself, etc.

Meanwhile, he goes out and, in a remote neighborhood, he makes a fire with a flintstone, he burns a bit of the hair of the horse, the horse appears, he tells it to bring him a complete outfit, all in red, and to come itself with the same color of saddlecloth, jewels, etc., with a javelin [text: cane] of the same color, which is done.

He goes to present himself on the square, etc. He is admired, etc.

In the end, he cuts off the head of Prince Rostam, horsemen pursue him, but they lose sight of him. He returns dressed [as he was] before the tailor arrives, who tells him what had happened. He pretends [not to know].

Great mourning at the court.

Three months afterward, other preparations of clothes for the marriage of the second prince, the fairies are confirmed upon seeing the Turkish clothes. Competition with javelins [text: canes] the day of the wedding.

Badi’ alzaman presents himself on the crossbred white horse, dressed in white, adorned with pearls and jewels. He is admired like the first time. He penetrates into the middle of a large group of eight hundred horsemen and kills [Prince] Guiath eddin. They intervene, he lets himself be caught.

He is taken to the sultan: A brother who has been left to die by his brothers has the right to kill them. He is recognized, he marries the third one, the [other] two are married to princes, relatives of the sultan.

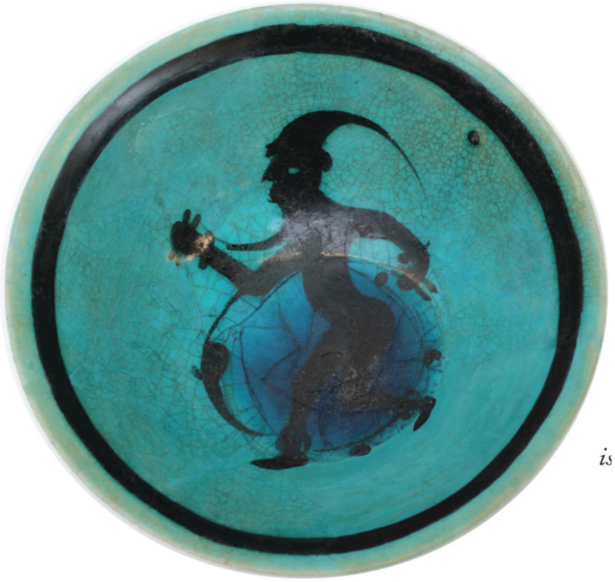
* * *

THE PURSE AND THE DERVISH TRUMPET, THE FIGS AND THE HORNS

(FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1709)

In this tale from Hanna Diyab, singular objects that work wonders are gained, lost, and then regained in a variation on an ancient story pattern known from Greece and India, as well as a German story by Fortunatus from 1509. The apparent simplicity of the marvelous objects is a staple of Diyab's tales, seen most famously in the unassuming lamp at the heart of "Aladdin," which is so old and unremarkable that the princess is willing to trade it for a new one. In this other story of marvels, Ali Cogia wastes his inheritance but is directed by his mother to an unremarkable storehouse and then to an abandoned garden. In each instance, he has no cause to suspect the magical properties of the purse, trumpet, and figs that he will discover there.

The profligate merchant's son is the prototypical Nights *hero, so if Galland had found an opportunity to include the tale in the story collection, it would not have been out of place. Diyab deserves credit for adapting the premise according to his knowledge of cities and commerce, according to the analysis of Ulrich Marzolph, who has compared the tale to its analogues and precursors. There is much to admire in Diyab's development of the premise: the streamlining of the number of protagonists from three to one, and even of the number of the objects themselves—since other versions often include an intermediate episode featuring an object that renders its bearer invisible. But above all, Diyab's creativity is evident in making the tale reflect his own world.*



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The running figure on this stonepaste bowl is painted in a style known as silhouette ware. From Iran, late twelfth century. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

ALI COGIA [ʿAlī Ḥojā], a very rich merchant in Damascus, found himself without children at an already much advanced age.

He gave alms richly, etc., so as to receive one from heaven. He then had a son who was named Hassan, and who was known as his by the name of Ebn Ali Cogia [Ali Cogia’s son]. He gave him a good education, etc., and when he died, his son was only fifteen or sixteen years old.

As soon as he was master of disposing of his wealth, he spent it on parties, debaucheries, etc., and at the age of about twenty years he was reduced to great poverty. He sold his furniture, the houses, and other possessions.

When he had nothing left to provide for him, he turned to his mother who had her own wealth that she managed. He asked her whether there was no place [where his father might have stored some goods]. After careful consideration, she gave him the key to a back storehouse, etc.

He opened it, he found three chests there. In one there were some ten sacks one inside the other, in the second a horn or a dervish trumpet made of horn, and in the third one a key. The tenth: he took the smallest of the ten sacks for his use.

As he had not found anything else, his mother advised him to see one of several of his father’s slaves whom his father had freed, and who were all living comfortably. He went to see the one who was best off and asked him to give him a job to make a living, etc. He gave him some cheese to sell by giving him several pounds of cheese at a fixed price per pound on commission in exchange for nourishing him and giving him ten small silver coins (five *sols*) each day for his effort.

Ebn Ali Cogia carries the cheese on his head and sells it for three hundred [silver] *médains* that he puts into the purse he had found, etc.

At his return that evening he gives account of the cheese and his revenue, and when opening the purse, the merchant is surprised to find three hundred gold coins instead of three hundred *médains*. He only takes what belongs to him and leaves the rest for Ebn Ali Cogia, advising him to make use of his good fortune that he revealed to him, to conduct himself carefully, etc. Ebn Ali Cogia returns home, tells his mother, etc., who is delighted about it.

In a short time he becomes rich by buying fine merchandise. He establishes a nice shop, gains [even more] by changing gold into *médains*. He buys nice houses and goods, etc. He informs his mother about his intention to travel to Cairo, etc. He buys slaves, rents some camels, he loads them with bales worth more than fifty thousand *séquins*.

Bidding farewell to his mother, he leaves his purse with her, takes some money for his voyage, arrives in Cairo, finds a place to stay, enters business and makes a great fortune.

He learns that the princess is such a great beauty that she is regarded as a miracle, but one only sees her in passing. He sees her and falls in love with her, even though he had only seen her in passing from one room to another. He had seen her twice that day. He brings more money the next day, etc. That continues for about a month. He sells his slaves, dismisses the rest of his personnel, [and finally] he has just enough money needed to return to Damascus.

He arrived very late at his mother's, who was quite surprised to see him alone. He led her to believe that he brings back great wealth, etc., and that he left the caravan two days behind. He eats, he goes to bed.

The next day he asks his mother for the purse, etc.

Soon he produced more money, buys another horse, and returns before the arrival of the caravan without saying anything to his mother, he returns to Cairo. Soon he gained money in gold coins by exchanging gold for *médains*, etc.

He dresses up. He returns to the palace in order to see Moon of Moons [Arabic Qamar al-aqmār]. Several times a day, for one hundred gold pieces each time.

After a month, Moon of Moons, who sees so much gold appear, talks about the affair to her father, the sultan. The sultan wants to meet Ebn Ali Cogia. He appears before him in the presence of his grand vizier. The sultan asks him who he is, where he is from, where he gets so much money, etc. As he remains silent, he [the sultan] gives orders to cut off his head, etc.

In order to save himself, he decides to disclose the secret, etc. He shows the purse to the sultan who can't believe it. He has him see for himself, etc. The sultan does not refrain from giving orders to the executioner who takes him [to a place] opposite the palace, etc. The grand vizier makes the sultan understand his unjust behavior, that he already has the purse, etc.

Ebn Ali Cogia is set free.

He returns to Damascus, he tells his mother about the events and his misfortune, etc., and asks her advice after having eaten all that had remained. He asks for the key to the back storehouse, etc. He goes there to fetch the dervish trumpet, he brings it to his mother. He puts some médains inside that do not transform into gold.

Heavily disappointed, he goes out without knowing where he is going, etc.

He sits down under a tree, the trumpet makes him think about becoming a dervish. He tries to make it sound and right away he sees a great and powerful army advancing. He is very much surprised, the officers come to him, they dismount, and they come to ask what orders he has to give them and that they are ready, etc.

He ponders the virtues of the trumpet, he takes advantage of the situation, and he declares that he wants to go and lay siege to the great Cairo. The army increases even more as he sounds the horn. His pavilion appears amidst the army. The army marches until [they reach] Cairo. He camps just outside [of the city] surrounding it with all the cannons at midnight.

Getting up in the morning earlier than usual, the grand vizier notices the powerful army thanks to the light of day. He goes up to the roof, and he sees an army with numerous soldiers.

He runs to the palace, he wakes the sultan, and he advises him, order to close the gates of the city; spy, nobody has the courage. A thousand *séquins* promised, a poor man presents himself; on condition that the one thousand *séquins* be given to his wife and his family [if he does not return].

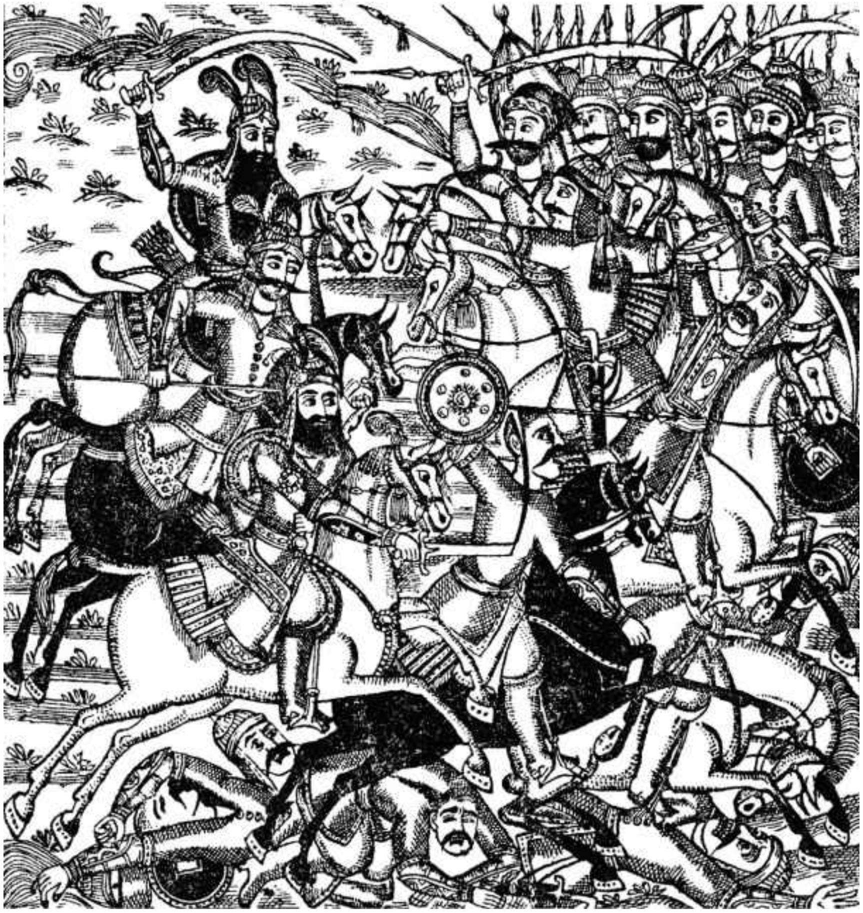


Illustration by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i depicting the story of "Umar ibn al-Numan and His Sons" From the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of The Thousand and One Nights. *The glimpses of warfare in Diyab's tale of "The Purse and the Dervish Trumpet, the Figs and the Horns" is reminiscent of Crusader sagas like that of Ibn al-Numan. Image reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

They let him down over the walls, he enters the camp. He is initially asked why he is not in his tent. He does not dare to ask who is the king, nor [tell them] why he has come. He encounters a water carrier [saca; Arabic *saqqā*ʾ] and asks him for something to drink. The water carrier asks him whether there is a water carrier in his [own] quarter. He would only have to denounce him, and he [the spy] would be chased away, etc., for the camp is kept in good order. He excuses himself for having veered away [from his own quarter]. The water carrier gives him something to drink, and he profits from the occasion to ask him in secret whether he knows the name of the king. The water carrier responds that he himself does not know anything more than he does.

Whatever ruses he [the spy] tries, they have the same knowledge. The spy advances, people keep asking him why he does not return to his tent, etc. He advances until [he reaches] the king’s pavilion where he is arrested. He is brought before Ebn Ali Cogia who interrogates him and who threatens him. He admits why he had been sent, the money he had received. He is sent back in safe conduct with the order to say that they were going to launch the assault by midday, raze the walls [and penetrate] the palace of the king whom he wants to make his prisoner.

The spy is thrown over the walls, he is presented to the sultan and makes his report. About the inability to defend themselves. Advice, an envoy is sent to ask for the reason, responded that his intention is to take the king alive and that, etc. The envoy talks about a compromise settlement, he outrightly rejects the settlement, proposing nevertheless an amount of one hundred million, etc.

The envoy returns.

The sultan gathers the council, asks that everybody contributes. They start to collect. Meanwhile one of the viziers, after having considered the situation carefully, suggests to the king that obviously this large army could not sustain itself for a long time, etc. They should let the besieging king know that the money was ready, and come to count it, invite him to a meal.

He is invited, and he is only allowed to enter with two or three hundred men. When he arrived they want to arrest him, him and his officers. He sounds the horn and immediately the whole army advances and surmounts the walls until [they reach] the palace.

The sultan asks to be spared. Ebn Ali Cogia did not know the horn’s secret for sending the army back. Nevertheless, he decides to present the horn’s front side, and the whole army dissolved and disappeared.

At this very moment, they threw themselves upon Ebn Ali Cogia and took the trumpet, and the sultan wanted to slit his throat.

The grand vizier again saved his life.

* * *

HE RETURNS to Damascus once more, where he tells his mother [everything]. He again asks whether she knows anything else, etc. He goes again to the back storeroom, he takes the key, he asks his mother which key it is. She does not know anything about it unless it should be the key to an abandoned and neglected garden in which no one has entered ever since she was married. She looks at the key and doubts that it is the one.

Ebn Ali Cogia goes to try, it was the one, he opens, he searches all over the garden, etc. He only sees a great fig tree full of beautiful figs, some of them black and the other ones white, even though it was winter.

He picked some of the black ones and ate several. Suddenly he felt horns coming out of his head. These horns grew so high in a short amount of time that they found themselves entangled in the branches, and that he could not move from his place, etc.

As he made some of the white figs fall down, he collected and ate them. The horns fell off of him, etc.

Right away he figured out a way to avenge himself. He fills a large box with figs, many more black than white ones, joins a caravan, and he arrives in Cairo.

He finds a place to stay, he takes a large basket with a hundred figs neatly arranged and goes to present himself before the palace gate. He hawks the figs, the officers at the gate [see] the figs; he sells them for a gold coin each because of their rarity. While they bring them to the sultan, he retires to his khan. The sultan admires the figs.

Before anything else, he has a golden basin filled with them that he sends to the princess, his family, he takes some, eats them, and offers some at the same time to his grand vizier and other officers. Horns grow out of all their heads. Great astonishment, they grow to the top of the vault.[…] He is informed that the same thing happened to the princess and her younger sister and the other princesses [who were] her relatives.

Doctors were secretly called for. They cut the horns off, and the first one they cut off multiplies into several branches. They suggest other remedies, etc. Nothing. A call is made throughout the city to invite doctors or other people with secret knowledge, etc.

Ebn Ali Cogia disguises himself as a Persian and goes to present himself at the palace gate. He is ushered inside and after having informed him about the great secret, he is shown into the sitting room where the sultan and the grand vizier were, etc. He pretends to be astonished and wants to retreat out of fright. They prevent him [from doing so], he dissimulates, etc.

In the end he says that he knows a secret, but that pearls of bezoar and other precious stones would go into it [i.e., would be needed for its preparation], etc. The treasurer is ordered to take him to the treasury, he takes pearls of bezoar, etc., and, while the treasurer leaves to get something, he looks, and he sees his purse and the trumpet and he takes them, etc.

He returns to the khan to prepare the remedy that he has to bring the next morning, etc. He disguises the white figs as a sort of medicine.

He brings them, he has the king eat them in small portions. As a result, one of the horns falls off. He does the same so as to have the other one fall off. The sultan thinks of the princess whom he sends forth before the viziers, etc. He cures the princess, her sisters, and finally the viziers.

Note [from Galland]: He is offered anything he asks for as a reward and they have him enter the treasury where he only asks for the purse and the trumpet that he sees there. He is granted them, even though their value is known, etc.

He returns to Damascus where he gets married, etc.

CAMAREDDIN AND BEDRE AL BODOUR

(MONDAY, MAY 6, 1709)

Diyab recounted the tale of Qamar al-din and Badr al-Budur on May 6, 1709, early in his storytelling sessions with Galland, and if the French translator's later references in his diary to browsing through his notes from these sessions to pick up more stories for his story collection are an indication of a conscious process of selection, it is unclear why he would have excluded this tale. The story is a variation on a well-established tale type, documented in European and other traditions, of the faithful wife who must outwit opponents in order to recover her captured husband (Marzolph, "The Man Who Made the Nights Immortal," p. 121).

If Galland did not feel the tale merited inclusion, it certainly resonated with Diyab's preoccupations as a young traveler and observer. This tale plays out as a contest of will and wit between two strong women, Budur and Morgiane, who demonstrate their prowess through a game of chess. Besting the sultan at chess, Budur recalls other intelligent heroines in the One Thousand and One Nights *such as Tawaddud, who is featured in a tradition of illustrations that portray her skills at board games such as backgammon. In his* Book of Travels, *written nearly half a century after relating this tale, Diyab would continue to attribute differences in women's behavior to the differences in their education. He recalls that, in Paris, women as well as men were offered lessons in church. Interpreting for a visiting Turkish emissary as he conversed with ladies of the French court, he records the diplomat's amazement at their wit and refinement. In "Camareddin and Bedre al Bodour," there is comparable stress on the significance of a woman receiving the same education as a man, and the female protagonist succeeds in rescuing her beloved cousin by outsmarting the favorite of the sultan's court and beating the sultan himself at chess. Likewise in "The Jealous Sisters," Diyab emphasizes that the princess* *receives the same education as her brothers, anticipating her success in her later adventures.*

A COUSIN AND HIS cousin, Camareddin [Qamar al-Dīn] and Bedre al Bodour [Badr al-Budūr],[5] were raised together and in the end married.

They were born on the same day to two brothers who lived in Baghdad in the same mansion. As they grew up, they had the same teachers both for physical education and for the fine arts and the sciences. Their fathers [text: brothers] did so with the intention that they would begin to love each other in their youth, so as to marry them when they would come of age, when they would be left without father and mother.

Fullest of Full Moons, who noticed that Camareddin was about to lose himself in debauchery, advised him to go on a commercial trip to Ispahan [Isfahan]. As Camareddin expresses to his cousin that he cannot make up his mind to leave her and at the same time lose sight of her, she herself makes her portrait in great likeness, with which he contents himself.

When he arrived in Ispahan, after three days, Morgiane [Murjāna], the favorite of the sultan of Ispahan, who had granted her the right to play chess with all the foreign merchants who would come to his capital and to take possession of their merchandise if they lost, or to pay them the sum to which it amounted, should she lose, and in addition to imprisoning them without hope of being released before their death, plays with him [Camareddin] the third day after his arrival.

He loses and is locked up in prison.

He does not eat anything for the first three days.

One of the prisoners who found him convinced him to eat by telling a little story about a well-to-do man and a dervish. The well-to-do man who had started his travels without provisions was forced to eat the black bread with which the dervish had provisioned himself, after initially having refused it.

He has the idea to look at the portrait of his cousin: he cries when seeing it. The guard of the khan, noticing that Camareddin held the portrait, and that it was this that made him cry, gave him a slap and took the portrait from him.

The guard who takes it from him brings it to the sultan of Persia. The sultan falls in love with Camareddin's cousin upon seeing the portrait. He orders one of his viziers under pain of death to search for her and to bring her to him. The vizier disguises himself as a merchant, goes to see Morgiane's prisoners, and he finds the means to learn from Camareddin all the information he needs.

The vizier who comes to pick his brain makes him believe that he knows him because he had previously seen him in Baghdad. He travels to Baghdad disguised as a dervish, arrives and spends three (four or five) days in a row in front of the mansion of Fullest of Full Moons. Fullest of Full Moons notices him, she has him summoned and entertains him for some days, and the vizier [disguised as a] dervish appears to succeed.

Fullest of Full Moons reminds herself of the dervish's affectation when passing before her house [i.e., she notices that the passing of the dervish before her house was a strange coincidence] and suspects something regarding the length of Camareddin's voyage. She learns about his condition through geomancy.

Pretending that some friends are visiting her, she has the alleged dervish told not to return until three days later.

She uses this time to dig a large hole in the ground [text: an underground place] [covered] with a trap door, hidden inside a closet. On the third day, the dervish returns, she has him dress in magnificent clothes, eats with him. After the meal, there is a loud noise at the door. She makes the vizier believe that it is a brother who is simply coming to see her, and she has him hide in the closet. As soon as he has entered, she operates the trap door, and he falls [into the hole].

Then she buys goods for eighty purses, disguises herself as a man, and takes the road to Persia, together with three or four of her maids, disguised [in the same manner] as she is, to Ispahan.

She stays in the same khan as Camareddin, and the guard pities her, as he had pitied Camareddin.

Morgiane comes to play chess with her the third day, she wins, and Morgiane sends her a hundred purses the next morning.

The sultan is informed about Morgiane’s loss, and he learns about the beauty of Alaeddin [ʿAlā al-Dīn], the name that Fullest of Full Moons had adopted. He sends his prime minister to play with her so as to be informed by him what happened. He goes there in disguise the next morning, and the vizier informs Alaeddin about his position.

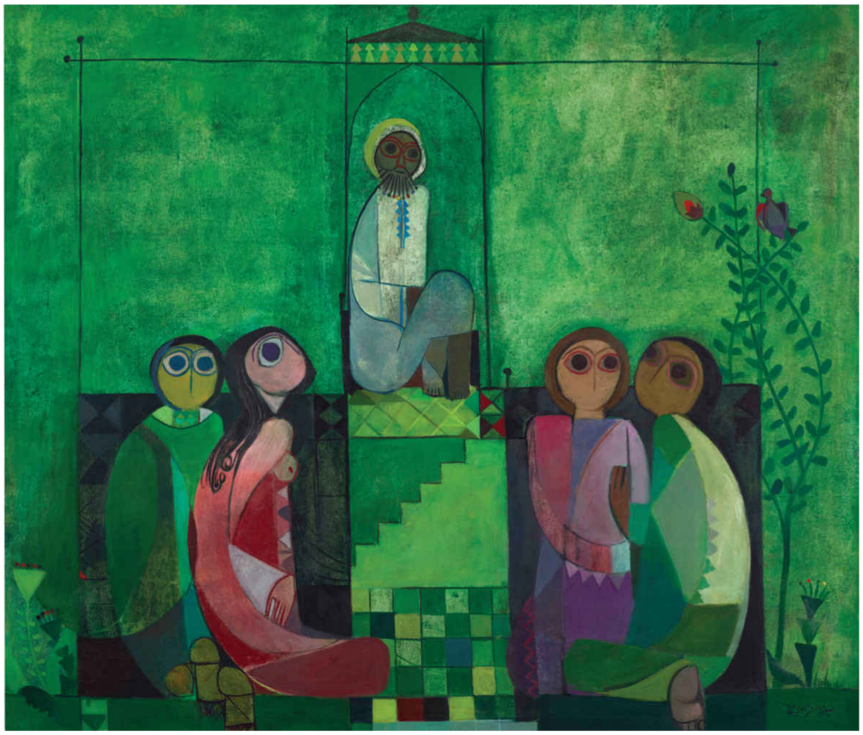
She plays chess with the sultan, on condition that if she wins, the sultan will have Morgiane killed, and that he will free all the prisoners with whom she had played, and whom she had defeated, and should she lose herself, she would stay at the sultan’s court.

She wins against the king who keeps his word, she sets all the prisoners free, and they deposit with her whatever each one of them had lost—which she will give them [back] on condition that they go with her to Baghdad. [unreadable word] without doing the same to Camareddin whom she explicitly pretends not to notice, and Camareddin is more than happy to be free.

The sultan gives her Morgiane at her discretion, and Fullest of Full Moons grants her her life on condition that she retreats to a city at the borders of the kingdom of Persia that she designated.

She [Fullest of Full Moons] returns to Baghdad, and she gives the prisoners the freedom to retire to their own homes. Her merchandise and riches are brought into the mansion after Alaeddin, who had taken the key, had opened the door.

Camareddin, who takes Alaeddin to be his cousin’s husband, enters and hides himself protected by some bales, hoping to see her.



The story of "Masrur and Zayn al-Mawasif," painting by Dia al-Azzawi, 1967; printed with the permission of the artist. In this story, the wife of a Jewish merchant challenges Masrur to play chess with her for money, and Masrur loses all his possessions (as well as his heart) to her. The use of a chess match as a test of a character's intelligence occurs repeatedly in the tales of One Thousand and One Nights, *and female characters often prove their superiority through this device. Diyab utilizes this motif to construct his tale of Camareddin and Bedre al Bodour.*

The false Alaeddin goes to his room, takes off his male dress, puts on female clothes and steps down into the courtyard. She approaches the bales, notices Camareddin [text: Alaeddin], and pretends at first not to recognize him. She recognizes him, but Camareddin can hardly believe that Alaeddin is not her husband.

She enlightens him, etc., and then brings him to where the vizier disguised as dervish was, whom she lets out of the underground place. Camareddin and he [the vizier] recognize each other.

Fullest of Full Moons sends him [the vizier] back to Ispahan with a letter to the king of Persia by which she introduces herself. At his return, the vizier confirms this to him [i.e., to the king].

Fullest of Full Moons and Camareddin marry.

[In Arabic:] This is your grave until you will meet your Lord.

HASSAN THE TEA SELLER

(SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 1709)

The Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab never indicated that he believed that the tales he recounted to Galland belonged to The Thousand and One Nights *that the Frenchman sought to complete translating, as he recalled in his* Book of Travels *some five decades later. Nonetheless, in assembling or adapting "Hassan the Tea Seller" for Galland on June 2, 1709, the young Diyab demonstrated a good sense of the plot elements that belong in the story collection that Aboubakr Chraïbi has dubbed a "mirror for merchants": a successful merchant envied and sabotaged by an "envier," a lost people and a petrified city, a jinni jilted by the object of his affection, and a sultan who restores justice. The tale reads like a mashup of the story lines of some of the earliest tales in the Arabic core of the* One Thousand and One Nights *(which are presented in Part I of this volume).*

In its broad outline, the tale recalls the setup of "The Tale of the Second Old Man" in "The Story of the Merchant and the Jinni." In that tale, a successful merchant is thrown overboard by his two brothers after he has repeatedly set them up in life and resisted their requests to travel with them to trade. As in that tale, the protagonist of "Hassan the Tea Seller" finds a bride on the shore who is connected to enchantment (a jinniya in the original tale, the object of a jinni's unreciprocated desire in this one), and who will prove key to restoring his fortunes after he is sabotaged. The damage will come in this story from the envier, a one-eyed merchant who is literally the embodiment of the evil eye, who cuts the ship's anchor and strands Hassan on shore.

His bride's backstory, in turn, recalls the petrified city of "The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner" in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad" (a tale that already reads like a gender-switched version of "The Tale of the Second Old Man"). In the Owner's tale, the city is turned to black stone when its inhabitants refuse to convert to the true faith, and the prince survives due to the past intervention of an old lady *who had taught him the Qur’an. In Hassan’s tale, the princess who will be his bride has likewise been saved by an old servant, who protects her in an enchanted tree. The fit with* The Thousand and One Nights *is so perfect that its absence might best be explained by recalling that Galland died before the publication of the final volume. Rather than assuming that the French translator had deliberately omitted some of the tales recounted to him by Diyab, we should consider whether he had intended to come back to them for later volumes of the collection.*

THE MARONITE HANNA told me the Story of Hassan the Seller of Herbal Tea that follows:

A seller of herbal tea, who had earned enough money with his profession to live a life of ease was already at an old age but had not yet had a child. His wife became pregnant after many prayers, vows to give alms, etc., and she gave birth to a son.

He took great care to bring him up well, to teach him how to read and write, etc. He dies, and before dying he advises his wife to prevent his son as much as possible from becoming a seller of herbal tea, as he was, after his death.

When the son had reached the age of thirteen or fourteen, his mother suggests that he learn a profession. She takes him to the city, has him consider each [profession] individually, etc. He does not decide in favor of any of them, and he declares that he does not want to take any other [profession] than that of his father, which his mother had always kept hidden from him.

One day, when his mother was in the city, he decides to take a look at what was in an armoire that was a bit high. He found the leather vessel, and the cups of gilded silver that his father had used for selling herbal tea, with two gold coins that came out as he shook the vessel. When his mother returned, he shows the vessel to his mother, etc., and he declares that, because his father had sold herbal tea, he also wanted to sell it, like him.

The mother explained his father’s will to him.

He did not want to listen.

He bought some licorice and prepared herbal tea. He filled the leather pouch with it. He loaded it, took the cups, in very proper dress, white shirt, straight sleeves, everybody wanted to drink his herbal tea just by seeing him. That day he brought home in small silver change the value of a gold coin that his mother counted. It was more or less the same thing every day.

His mother, astonished, disguised herself one day in order to, etc., and she saw how much everybody hastened to call him, and the generosity, etc., etc.

Within three years he had gained fifteen hundred gold coins and more.

Some months later, after having counted his profit, one Friday, passing by the covered bazaar whose gate was closed, he found the porter sitting close to the counter to whom he offered a cup of herbal tea at a price he could not refuse. He wanted to take out money, Hassan rejected it firmly, he did not want to take anything for it.

Out of gratitude, the porter told him to enter. He found the merchants assembled, whom he serves something to drink, beginning with the official who gives him a handful of silver without [even] looking at what he was giving. The others did the same thing in proportion except for a single, misshapen, and one-eyed merchant, who gives him only a single coin of the lowest value.

Since he remains standing before them, etc., the official says to him: my son, what else do you want, etc.

Hassan: Excuse me if I stay [wanting to listen to the topic with which] you entertain yourselves.

The official: That is none of your concern, that is, etc.

I will not leave, says Hassan, if you do not tell, etc.

The one-eyed merchant gets up, gives him a slap that throws him down to the ground and breaks his nose, etc. The official and the other merchants reproach him, etc.

Hassan gets up, etc., and declares that he will not leave until he will have obtained what he demands. The official lets the party know that they could grant it to him, etc.

My son, says he, we are merchants. A merchant who had been on an island has returned with a ship so prodigiously full of merchandise that he has filled the storerooms of three khans with it. We want to rent the same ship and to use the same captain, etc., etc., the captain will not, etc.

Hassan offers to be their servant, etc., their cook, etc.

They say that they each have their servants, etc., and that their company is fixed, etc.

As Hassan urges them, the official tells him in the end that each of them had contributed a certain amount to commission the ship and that they could accept him only under the same conditions, etc.

They ask him what he wants to give.

Hassan says fifteen hundred gold coins.

He is admitted, they tell him to buy his supplies, etc. He leads his mother to believe that his father appeared to him in a dream and asked him to give alms. For these presents, he has ten hundredweight of biscuits prepared, he takes fifteen hundred gold coins, has his biscuits taken aboard.

He boards, they set sail.

They arrive at the island and alight in the harbor. Since all of the inhabitants there were transformed to stone, the merchants have difficulties [i.e., are afraid] to set foot on the ground and to enter the city.

The one-eyed man suggests sending Hassan. Hassan agrees on condition that if something happens to him they give his share to his mother. They assure him, etc.

He sets foot on the ground, open shops, everybody petrified, in the houses, in the streets, etc. He arrives at the palace, he sees the same thing, a black stone. He enters the rooms. He wanders through them, he arrives in a place where he finds bread coming out of the oven, meat turning over the fire, he eats, etc. In this place there was something like an artificial tree with several branches, etc.

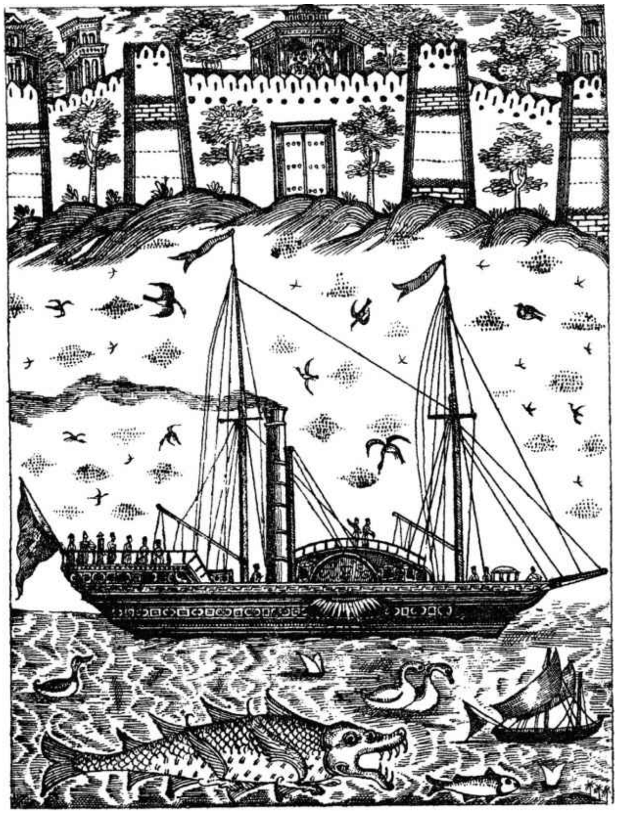


Illustration of the city of Queen Marjana from "The Tale of Qamar al-Zaman and Budur" from the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of the One Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

He sees a beautiful lady, young, emerge from the top. Astonishment on both sides, clarification.

The lady recounts that a jinni had asked the king her father for her hand in marriage, that following his refusal, after several threats, [the jinni] had petrified the king, etc., the entire city. As for her, her wet nurse had saved her with this artificial tree and it was by this means that she lived.

The princess loves Hassan. Hassan loves her.

They eat together, they [unreadable] bread, wine, meat, without seeing anyone. The princess has her wet nurse come, consultation about the means to embark together with Hassan, without either the merchants or the seamen knowing anything. The advice of the wet nurse is to first send aboard what is most precious in eleven bundles, and to hide the princess and herself in the twelfth bundle where she held the secret [magic] for them to stay together as long as necessary.

But first they would have to kill the jinni who would come to sleep each night in a room with his saber.

[Hassan] agrees, the wet nurse advises him, and he kills him.

He prepares the bundles together with the wet nurse, etc. He returns to the ships where he hides what must be hidden. The merchants come ashore, choose the merchandise they find in the covered bazaar, in private homes, etc., everyone according to his inclination, especially the finest wares. Hassan goes to the palace, and he also sends the twelve bundles aboard.

When the ship is completely loaded, and there is nothing left but to set sail, Hassan remembers that he forgot to take the jinni's saber. He asks to be given time, the official and the other merchants tell him that he has enough time because they need to provision themselves with fresh water, etc., but against the advice of the one-eyed merchant.

He goes to fetch the saber and meanwhile the one-eyed merchant, impatient, who resented him, cuts the cable of the anchor.

The captain is obliged to set sail, etc.

Hassan returns, sees the ship already very far away, etc.

He stays some time in the abandoned city. A ship is thrown toward the island by a storm, the ship that was loaded skirts the island, he makes signs, they come to take him, and he loads […] several boxes of precious goods.

He arrives at the harbor from where he had set out. He goes to see the merchants, they send him to the one-eyed man who had the twelve bundles [text: boxes] that he had not delivered to Hassan's mother, according to their agreement.

The one-eyed man pretends not to recognize him, the merchants talk to him, he does not listen. As they were obliged to him, and as they did not want to bear witness against him, they advise Hassan to appeal to the sultan.

He presents a petition, the one-eyed merchant appears in court, he denies.

Hassan says that there are no other witnesses except the bundles [text: boxes] themselves.

The sultan has the bundles [text: boxes] brought forth that Hassan recognizes through his mark, and that he has taken away. They bring them to the sultan. An officer, knocking on the first bundle that was shown and asking it to whom the twelve bundles belong; answer: they belong to Hassan, the son of the seller of herbal tea.

The one-eyed man punished, etc.

Hassan regains his possessions, he has the twelve bundles brought to his house, etc.

He marries the princess.

He has a house built in the city for himself, a house in the countryside, etc.

THE TEN VIZIERS

(MONDAY, MAY 27, 1709)

Hanna Diyab provided Galland with a summary of part of the frame tale for "The Ten Viziers." This work, as Ulrich Marzolph has observed, is based on The Book of Bakhtiyâr, *an originally Persian work whose essential plot is similar to that of the Persian* Book of Sindbad, *a collection of moral stories whose Western versions are commonly known as* The Seven Sages of Rome. *The first part of the tale, missing in Galland's notes from Diyab's storytelling, tells of the king's stubborn love for the beautiful daughter of one of his viziers, their exile, and the abandonment of their son during their escape.*

THE ARABS, as I learned from the Maronite Hanna, have a book of tales titled [in Arabic: *al-ʿashr al-wuzarāʾ*] The Ten Viziers.

A sultana gives birth during a voyage in a deserted place, and the prince to whom she gives birth is abandoned there and exposed.

The leader [of a band of robbers] finds him, takes care of him and brings him up, and when he comes of age, he makes him a robber like himself.

He and his men are attacked by the sultan's people. Most of the robbers are taken captive, and the prince is among them. The leader and the rest escape.

The sultan, before whom they are taken, finds the prince, his son, whom he does not recognize, however, nice appearing, and retains him in his service.

The prince behaves so amiably that he takes all kinds of confidence in him, to the point of allowing him to be present in his conversations with his wife, and even to see her in his absence, and to live [with them] informally.

The sultan's ten viziers, envious of his reputation and his favor, convince the sultana to accuse him before the sultan of having tried to attack her honor.

The sultan has him arrested, and he interrogates him, and he sentences him to death.

The prince obtains a respite of ten subsequent days; by telling him a tale each day, he [advocates to practice] patience in all deliberations regarding the life of a [man condemned to death] before actually executing him, [but] this does not save him from being sentenced to be crucified, or to be hanged.

As they are about to kill him, the leader of the robbers, who had changed his ways, arrives, makes his way through the crowd, embraces the prince, and demands to die in his stead.

They bring him before the sultan who, by way of what he learns from him, recognizes the alleged culprit to be the prince, his son.

He has nine other crosses erected for the punishment of the ten viziers.

The sultan's wife, who was the prince's mother and who had been viciously misled, is saved.

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1. *Translator's note:* The *corban* (Arabic: *qurbān*) denotes the ritual slaughter of a sheep, signifying a proper dedication ceremony.

2. *Translator's note:* Morhagian is probably a transcription of the Persian *Morgh-e jān*, meaning "Bird of the Soul." As jinn often keep their external soul hidden in the body of a bird, this appears to be a suitable name for a jinni.

3. *Translator's note: Couture* can mean "scar," but it can also mean "seam," as in sewing—and she stitches him together. Although it is not clear whether the storyteller was aware of this, the text thus plays on the analogy with sewing.

4. *Translator's note:* The *girit* (from Arabic: *jarīd*) is a long javelin used by Ottoman soldiers. The competition of throwing the javelins, executed on horseback, was extremely popular in Ottoman Turkey. Galland mentions it in the diary of his sojourn in Constantinople; see *Journal d'Antoine Galland pendant son séjour à Constantinople (1672–1673)*, ed. Charles Schefer, vol. 2 (Ernest Leroux, 1881), p. 105.

5. *Translator's note:* Literally, the name means "Full Moon of Full Moons" and has been rendered by Galland as "*Pleine Lune des Pleines Lunes*." As the name's construction in Arabic implies perfection, it means "The Quintessential Full Moon" and has been rendered here as "Fullest of Full Moons."

IV.

TRANSLATORS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATORS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

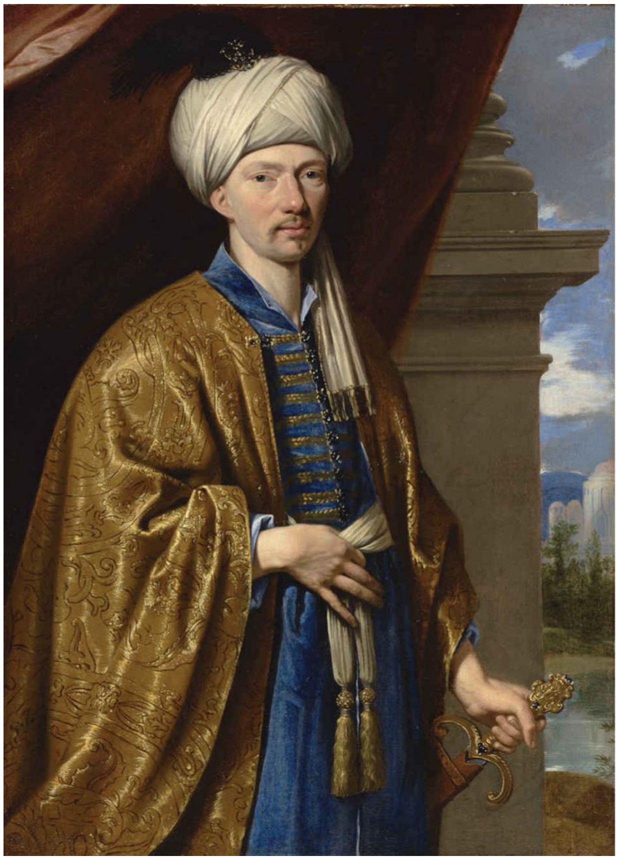
THE CRITICAL ROLE of translation in shaping the reception of the *Nights* has meant that the personalities of the stories' most famous translators have sometimes loomed as large as the tales themselves. Some, like Antoine Galland, have essentially been credited with authorship of the version of the *Arabian Nights* that has gained such popularity among Western readers. These historical translations, fascinating examples of the cultural and political imperatives of the various periods in which they were produced, should be read in this spirit. In the throes of Romanticism, nineteenth-century English versions of the *Nights*, for example, were invested with the idea that the rhythm and poetry of the tales captured the very essence of the Arab people. Modern translation scholars still return to the example of Richard Burton for a distinctive example of a translation method that is intentionally "foreignizing"—departing from the conventions of good English style in order to give the reader a sense of the cultural differences embodied in the original. The embeddedness of this method in the project of empire-building, however, should not be forgotten in the process.

Another compelling reason to revisit these historical translations was the impetus for my study of the collaborative relationships that were crucial to the production of the famous translations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Marvellous Thieves* explores the neglected role of various storytellers, teachers, translators, and editors who were critical to the work of Galland, Lane, and Burton. Hidden within the pages of their multivolume translations are the many contributions of other linguistic and narrative talents who regaled the famous European translators with stories and anecdotes and glosses for their commentaries and their translations. These versions of the *Arabian Nights* remain a record of this labor, even if they were celebrated as the achievement of a singular European translator in their own time.

Contemporary translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* reflect a different historical moment and the distinct experiences and skill sets of their translators. Their production and reception are more likely to have been shaped by the Arab Spring and the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015 than by the imperialist histories that remain intertwined with the classic early translations of the *Nights*. As my conversations with contemporary translators that round off this section reveal, the Arabists who are producing the new translations of the *Nights* include a wide range of female voices (Claudia Ott, Ellen Wulff, Roberta Denaro) and translators who themselves represent the Arab diaspora (in the case of Mamede Jarouche).

ANTOINE GALLAND

THE FRENCH ANTIQUARIAN Antoine Galland received unexpected popular acclaim in the last decade of his life as he applied his linguistic skills to the unlikely task of translating the Arabic tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*. His French translations generated such an enthusiastic response from readers that they reportedly threw stones at the windows of his Paris apartment, demanding that he deliver ever more stories as the mania for “Oriental” tales took root in early eighteenth-century France.



Antoine Galland was long assumed to be the subject of Philippe de Champaigne's Portrait d'un Turc *(ca. 1660–1663), a misapprehension that mirrors overstatements of his authorship of the stories added to* Mille et une nuits *through the agency of Hanna Diyab. The sitter for this portrait was in fact the naturalist Jean de Thévenot. © Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.*

Little in his background marked Galland as a future author of Middle Eastern tales, much less fairy tales like "Aladdin" or "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu." Following the publication of *Mother Goose* and other collections in the 1690s, a French passion for fairy tales penetrated the salons and family reading rooms of Paris, but Galland initially dismissed this fad. Even his acquisition of Arabic seems to have been merely a by-product of a career originally defined by his expertise in the classical languages of Greek and Latin. His association with the Jansenist sect of Catholicism and his languages earned him an appointment to the Embassy of France in Constantinople in the early 1670s. His remit originally was narrow: He was to use his classical linguistic skills to correspond with the patriarchs of the Eastern churches, from whom the Jansenists hoped to obtain ammunition against other Catholics and

Protestants in disputes over transubstantiation and free will. By all accounts, the embassy itself, with its Greco-Roman antiquities, was largely oblivious to the material and literary culture of the Ottoman world outside its doors.

It was in Constantinople that something unexpected happened. Galland fell in love with the city, its languages, and its book markets. Returning to the city in the late 1670s with commissions, Galland marveled at the rich stores of knowledge on offer. He found that one could accomplish in a year in Constantinople, what in other cities it might take ten or twenty years. Despite his orders to focus on collecting useful texts in medicine, history, and geography and to avoid manuscripts of Arabic poetry or fiction, Galland couldn't help himself. He bought up entire libraries, far exceeding the lists of approved subjects from his patrons at court. Scholars of the *Arabian Nights* have searched Galland's journals in vain for signs of a specific interest in storytelling or a talent for capturing human behavior, but they do reveal that the Orientalist had developed something that would prove particularly useful for a translator and compiler of *The Thousand and One Nights*: a bibliophile's curiosity.

In his training and his predilections, Galland still remained a classicist. He first took an interest in "Sinbad" in Paris because of similarities to *The Odyssey*, and he even made the man-eating giant in his version a Cyclops in a nod to Homer. Nonetheless, his broader curiosity led him to procure an Arabic manuscript of *The Thousand and One Nights* in 1701. The story collection was a mixture of many different genres—some urban and gritty, some historical and theological—but it also contained some fairy tales and animal fables that would seem more familiar to French readers. If Galland had merely been a Charles Perrault or Countess d'Aulnoy, with the added differential of a command of Arabic, and had discarded stories not conforming to the conventions of the fairy tale, his *Arabian Nights* would not have had the wide-ranging impact on literary production that it did. Galland's bibliomania and expansive curiosity about texts was key. The revolution sparked by his edition of the *Arabian Nights* took place first within the realm of realism, as the stories of cycles such as "The Hunchback" enlarged the scope of acceptable characters, social types, and plots. Later, with the discovery of the potential of new technologies and media, the spectacle of pantomime and panorama, cinema and video games, would reshape the way in which the stories of the *Arabian Nights* entered popular culture.

Galland’s influence on the shape of the *Arabian Nights* in Western culture also rests on his decision to take a chance on the tales of a young Syrian storyteller whom he met in Paris in the spring of 1709. Seeking out oral storytellers in order to jot down their tales was not yet in fashion: The brothers Grimm would only publish the first edition of their fairy tales a century later, in 1812. However, after a fortuitous meeting with Hanna Diyab, Galland sought out the storyteller’s “beautiful” tales. After a few weeks of intense storytelling, he had taken notes from Diyab’s recitations of a dozen stories and had obtained at least the promise of a text of “Aladdin.” Prior to this lucky encounter at the home of his friend and rival Paul Lucas, Galland’s progress on his French translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, from an Arabic manuscript that had only 282 tales was destined to stall. His publishers were already preparing to choose stories from other sources to round out the story collection—inserting two Turkish tales into the eighth volume of Galland’s *Nights* without his consent. Diyab’s tales allowed Galland to finish the last four volumes of his popular collection.

In France, Galland is perhaps too readily credited as author, inventor, and creator of the *Arabian Nights*, at the expense of Hanna Diyab and all those who contributed to the original Arabic tales. Yet, outside of French letters we run the opposite risk of not recognizing the centrality of his contribution to the circulation of the tales in world letters. There is always the possibility—as in the famous Jorge Luis Borges essay on the translators of the *Arabian Nights*—for Galland to be reduced to a foil for more interesting personalities, or even a punch line because of the “scandalous decorum” perceived in his tales. Nothing about Galland compares to Richard Burton’s talent for fabricating scandal or to J. C. Mardrus’s entrepreneurial charisma, but well into the twentieth century, in France and in many other literary markets taking their cues from Paris, Galland’s *Nights* was the *Arabian Nights*.

Galland’s translation is represented in this volume by an excerpt from the bootleg English translation produced almost immediately in London.

EXCERPT FROM THE INTRODUCTORY TALE OF SHAHRIYAR AND SHAHRAZAD[1]

SCHAZENAN BEING GONE, Schahriar ordered his grand visier to bring him the daughter of one of his generals. The visier obeyed; the sultan lay with her, and putting her next morning into his hands again, in order to be strangled, commanded him to get him another next night. Whatever reluctance the visier had to put such orders into execution, as he owed blind obedience to the sultan his master, he was forced to submit. He brought him the daughter of a subaltern, whom he also cut off next day. After her, he brought a citizen's daughter, and in a word, there was every day a maid married, and a wife murdered.

The rumour of this unparalleled barbarity occasioned a general consternation in the city, where there was nothing but crying and lamentation. Here a father in tears, and inconsolable for the loss of his daughter; and there tender mothers dreading lest theirs should have the same fate, making the air to resound beforehand with their groans. So that instead of the commendations and blessings which the sultan had hitherto received from his subjects, their mouths were now filled with imprecations against him.

The grand visier, who, as has been already said, was the executioner of this horrid injustice against his will, had two daughters, the eldest called Scheherazade, and the youngest Dinarzade; the latter was a lady of very great merit; but the elder had courage, wit, and penetration infinitely above her sex; she had read in abundance, and had such a prodigious memory, that she never forgot anything. She had successfully applied herself to philosophy, physic, history, and the liberal arts; and for verse, exceeded. The best poets of her time; besides this, she was a perfect beauty, and all of her fine qualifications were crowned with solid virtue.

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[1] *Editor’s note:* The ragged nature of this translation is not accidental; it is the famous Grub Street version, produced quickly and anonymously from Galland’s French. The title refers to the London district famous for popular and sometimes unlicensed and uncopyrighted books.

HENRY TORRENS

IN THE FOOTHILLS of the Himalayas in the 1830s, Henry Torrens probably would not have predicted that he would become known as the first English translator of *The Thousand and One Nights* from Arabic. As a British colonial officer stationed in India, Torrens was a romantic rather than a pragmatist. As a strong believer in fostering a public sphere to counter arbitrary rule, Torrens had cofounded the first newspaper in the upper provinces of India in the hope that it would prove a check on the colonial British government. “The native press,” he declared, “may oppose hereafter the ruling power.”

Torrens felt more at home in the Masonic lodges that preached a belief in the existence of a supreme being and commitment to universal brotherhood and tolerance than in his role as an officer in the Colonial Service. In Freemasonry, there was at least the possibility of opening up membership to native members who might be Muslim, Parsi, or Hindu, a policy that was championed by a close associate of Torrens, whom he celebrated in a song of his own composition in 1840. Torrens found the machinery of empire far harder to influence in the liberal direction that he admired, and his career in the British Colonial Service foundered.

Torrens’s work on the *Nights* was the accidental by-product of his opposition to the introduction of English as the language of education and administration in Colonial India. His original plan was to assist in the production of an edition of the story collection in Arabic, but that enterprise would only be funded if it was accompanied by the promise of a translation into English. Relying on the vital work of *munshis*, local language teachers, William Hay Macnaghten began to edit the Arabic text that would become known as Calcutta II, while Torrens set to work on the English. Macnaghten's talent for stitching together the Arabic text of the *Nights* was not matched by his ability to hold together British strategic interests in the region. Torrens soon lost both the editor of the Arabic manuscript and the labor of the *munshis* to Britain's ill-fated campaign in Afghanistan between 1839 and 1842. This interruption in his translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* meant that he only completed a portion of tales comparable to the core translated by Antoine Galland, rather than the much more comprehensive collection of stories in his manuscript.

As a writer and translator, Torrens had a deep investment in Romanticism, turning to Friedrich Schiller's poetry and translations of Shakespeare as models for his own work. Torrens approached the task of translation with the German Romantic's goal of capturing the original's imaginative and emotional qualities as fully as possible. This is evident in his portrayal of the condemned youth in "The Story of the Three Apples": "Now in the meantime, while they were even thus, lo! A young man, handsome in face, elegant in his apparel, his countenance fairer than the moon, and his eyes bright dark black, and his temple whiter than the lily, and his cheek, very ruddy, and his whole person fresh, and young, and his moles like a round spot of ambergris, and he ceased not making his way through the people until he arrived immediately before Jafar." Torrens championed the value of "lighter literature," which alone could grant posterity insight into "domestic manners" and "familiar habits of thinking." He lamented the lack of interest in fantasy and fiction in an era dedicated to "improvement," a time when the "whole tribe of giants and hippogriffs, dwarfs and enchanters" had been banished to "the nursery and the servant's hall."

In the preface to his translation of the *Nights*, Torrens reiterated his conviction that it was "the lighter literature of a people" that best captured a "national disposition." Torrens was an aspiring poet who saw the *Nights* as an outlet for his own literary ambitions, and he was determined to capture the beauty of this text as universal. He would be the first English translator to render all the poetry of the tales he translated. In this, he differed from Edward Lane, who at the same time remarked that the Arabic poetry was “untranslatable.” The difficulty lay with the target language, not the source language, for Torrens. He admitted he found it trying to translate from Arabic—“a perfect language adapted to convey with metaphysical nicety, every shade of feeling, and every mood of the mind”—into an “imperfect” tongue such as English, but he insisted that “enough” of the original beauty of the Arabic could be reproduced in English.

In his preface, Torrens comments that he had originally experimented with, and discarded, a less natural style for his translation. Torrens’s text stands in contrast to the heavily stylized versions of Lane, Payne, and Burton. The latter are strained by the attempt to impose a single register on the entire story collection: the diction of the King James Bible for Lane, a Pre-Raphaelite style for Payne, and an exaggerated, foreign-sounding style for Burton. Unconstrained by a similarly rigid approach, Torrens switches tone and register to suit particular passages. His style is relatively unadorned, but when quoting from the Qur’an, he adopts a more archaic register and uses antiquated personal pronouns. He follows Galland in transforming narration into dialogue where he can, and in the process he seems to give his characters a liveliness missing in the translations of his rival Lane. Burton would criticize the stylistic simplicity of Torrens’s translation by claiming that it has a “hag-like nakedness,” but among the Victorian versions, Torrens’s *Nights* seems, today, to be the most modern in its sensibility.

* * *

THIS EXCERPT, from “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad,” is likely responsible for contemporary Victorian notices of the translation that expressed shock at the suggestiveness of the language.

EXCERPT FROM "THE STORY OF THE PORTER AND THE THREE WOMEN OF BAGHDAD"

From Torrens's "Tale of the Porter and of the Three Girls," pp. 82–85, excerpted and edited into paragraphs.

THEN THE DAMSEL TOOK THE CUP, and drank it off, and sat down with her sisters, and they ceased not drinking, and the porter in the midst of them, and they kept on with dance and laugh, and songs and verses, and jingling anagrams, and the porter was going on with them with quips, and kisses, and cranks, and tricks, and pinches, and girls' play, and romping, this one giving him a dainty mouth-ful, and that one thumping him, and that one slapping his cheeks, and this serving perfumes to him, and he was with them in the height of joy, even as if he were sitting in the seventh Heaven among the houris of Paradise, and they stayed not doing after this manner, until the wines played in their heads, and in their senses.

Now when the wine got the better of them, the portress stood up, and took off some of her upper clothes, and she was unveiled, and she let flow a tress about her, as it were a garment, and she threw herself into the tank, and played with the water, and dived, and jumped up, and took the water in her mouth, and spurted it at the porter.

So she bathed, and washed herself, and then came out of the water, and sat by the side of the porter, and said, "Now my master, now my fine fellow," And she asked him a riddle.

So the porter said this, and that, and answered impudently, and she said, "Hallo! are you not ashamed?" And she seized him by the neck, and beat him heartily.

So he said again in like manner, and she struck him another slap on the back of his neck, and cried, "How, how, you wretch! are you not ashamed?"

So he said it again, and she cried, “Oh you! have you no shame in your talking?” So she thumped him with her hand, and beat him.

But the porter made a still worse answer, and she set upon him with still greater beating, and said, “No,” and he said, “’Tis so,” and the porter went on calling what he thought the answer of the riddle, and they beat him the more, and he was in no other plight than with his neck swelled with blows, and they laughed more and more among themselves, until he said, “And what is the answer to the riddle among you women?”

So the damsel said, “The noble basil plant.”

Then answered the porter, “Thanks be to heaven for deliverance! be thou prosperous! Oh! noble basil plant!”

So they sent round the cup, and the goblet, and the second damsel stood up, and took off some of her upper clothes, and said to the porter, “Now light of mine eyes.” And she asked him the same riddle, and he made a foolish answer, so she said, “So, there is no shame in you!” and she slapped him, and she beat him, till the courtyard sounded with the blows: then said she to him, “How, how, are you not ashamed!”

So he answered, “The noble basil plant.” And she said, “No.” And struck him, and slapped him on the back of the neck, and he kept on calling out all the answers to the riddle, he could think of, and they kept on saying, “No, no.”

So he said again, “The noble basil plant.”

And all the three laughed until their heads fell on their shoulders, and laid on slaps on his neck, and said, “No! that is not the answer.”

So he cried, “Oh my sisters, what is it?”

Then replied they, “The peeled sesame.”

So then they sat in social fellowship, but the porter kept saying, Oh! and Oh! for his neck and shoulders, and the cup passed round and round for a full hour. So then the fairest of them stood up, and took off some of her upper garments, and the porter touched his neck with his hand, and rubbed it gently, and said, “My neck and my shoulders, are in heaven’s way—common goods.” So the damsel took off her upper clothes, and cast herself into the tank, and dived, and sported about, and bathed: then looked the porter upon her unveiled, as if she were a fragment of the moon, her face like the moon when at the full, and like the dawn when at the brightest, and he looked on her fair stature, and her shape, and that massive figure that quivered as she went, and she was unveiled, even as when her mother bore her.…

* * *

SHE CAME UP from the tank, and went, and sat by his side, and said, “Now my master.” And she asked him again the same riddle.

So he answered, “The noble basil plant.” Said she, “Dear! no.”

So he cried, “The peeled sesame.” Said she, “Oh! no.”

So he made an answer as before, and she cried, “How! are you not ashamed,” and beat him on the nape of the neck, and he kept on calling out the answer, and said, “’Tis so.” She slapped him, and they all cried, “No, no,” until he said, “Oh my sister and what is the answer?”

And she said, “The khan of Aboo Munsoor.”

So said he, “God be praised for deliverance! ha! ha! khan of Aboo Munsoor!”

Then the cup passed round among them a full hour, until the porter stood up, and went down into the tank, and they looked at him, swimming in the water, and he bathed in like manner as they did.

Then he came up and threw himself among them, and said, “Now my mistresses,” and asked them a riddle, and they all laughed at his riddle till their heads fell on their shoulders, and one said, This, and the other, That, and he said, “No, no,” and took forfeits from each one of them for their foolish answers.…

* * *

THE GIRLS ceased not making foolish answers to the porter’s riddle, and he was taking forfeits, and playing them tricks until his heart was satisfied and filled with joy by them, and they laughed on till they said, “Oh brother! what is your riddle?”

So said he, “Know you not?”

They answered, “No.”

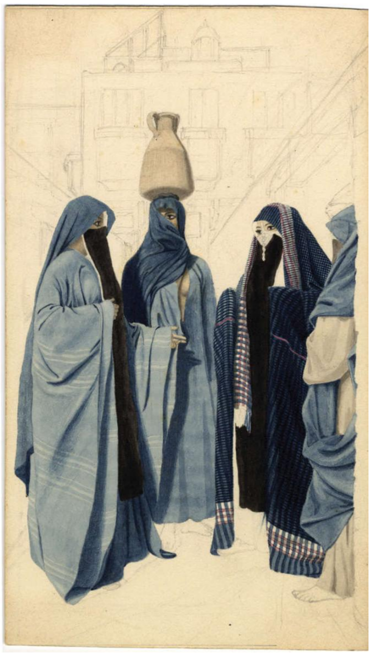
He said, “The mighty mule, that feeds on the noble basil plant, and eats the peeled sesame, and lives in the khan of Aboo Munsoor.”

Then laughed they till their heads fell on their shoulders, and they sat themselves down in social fellowship, and ceased not to be after this fashion until the night approached.

EDWARD LANE

ON HIS HABITUAL morning walk through Khan al-Khalili in Cairo in 1842, the scholar Ibrahim al-Dusuqi was startled to be greeted with great familiarity by a stranger at a friend’s shop. Before him stood a tall foreigner clothed in Ottoman garb who addressed him in formal Arabic. At the mention of the name Edward Lane, al-Dusuqi recalled that a common acquaintance had told him that an Orientalist scholar was seeking a man of the right temperament and skill set to work with him, and that he, al-Dusuqi, had agreed to the collaboration.

Out of step with the modern and secular spirit of industrial Britain, Edward William Lane spent long periods of time in residence in Cairo (1825–28, 1833–36, and 1843–49), which he found a better match for his religious and aesthetic sensibilities. An engraver by training, Lane was first attracted to Egypt by the challenge of recording its ancient artifacts and monuments, but it was his genuine interest in the customs and beliefs of the city’s Muslim population that kept bringing him back. In between his second and third residences in Cairo, Lane published a three-volume translation of the *One Thousand and One Nights* that placed the stories in a distinctly Islamic and Egyptian context by including copious notes drawn from his personal experience and scholarly research.



Watercolor from one of Edward Lane's notebooks from Egypt. In this image, Lane shows a willingness to eroticize women in the streets of Cairo, but his translation of the One Thousand and One Nights *omitted some of the story collection's strongest female protagonists. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.*

In 1842, al-Dusuqi felt himself immediately drawn to Lane, and, dining with him that evening, promptly agreed to work alongside him each day after the midafternoon prayer. The two men would collaborate daily for seven years. Al-Dusuqi, who was said to possess the "dictionary in his head," was indispensable to Lane's work on the *Arabic-English Lexicon*, and al-Dusuqi's memoir remarks on his collaborator's wisdom, moral character, gentle bearing, handsome appearance, and warm and affectionate nature. Lane's curiosity about reconciling the tenets of Christianity and Islam endeared the Englishman to al-Dusuqi, who claimed that Lane believed in the prophecy rather than deity of Jesus and condemned the consumption of pork and alcohol as unhealthy. Al-Dusuqi also suggested that the Lane he knew in the 1840s exhibited a continued open-mindedness regarding jinn.

Lane's attempts to blend Islam and Christianity also determined the distinctive traits of his version of the *Nights*: the adoption of the tone, diction, and style of the King James Bible (the only book Lane appears to have read, Robert Irwin wryly notes); the sympathetic portrayal of Islamic beliefs and practices, notably belief in magic and the jinn (and hence the realism of its treatment of magic); and his commentary's emphasis on affinities between the Jews of the Old Testament and the Arabs of ancient and modern Egypt, as a means of inviting sympathy for the practices of the latter. The originality of Lane's *Nights* was to present sympathetically the magical aspects of the tales as worthy of the credulity of Christian readers and compatible with the empiricism of the Victorian era.

Lane's version of the *Night*s was often appreciated more for his added annotations than for his translations of the stories. Fittingly, it was Lane's commentary that was excerpted in magazines in his era (the tales barely merit mention in reviews of his *Nights*). His notes, which were often drawn from the comments of Egyptian informants, constitute his literary legacy. Lane's notebooks reveal that when he is not citing a written source such as Johann Ludwig Burckhardt or Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, he often draws from Muhammad Ayyad al-Tantawi (whom he called "my Sheikh") on the language of the *Nights*, or Sheikh Ahmad on the customs of Cairo. If the famous Arabic-English dictionary for which Lane is best known among Arabists circulates in Cairo bearing both his name and al-Dusuqi's, a critical edition of Lane's *Nights* might likewise recognize other native collaborators.

For Lane, the availability of the historical and ethnographic material he had gleaned from his manuscripts and collaborators in Cairo enabled him to sympathetically re-create in his *Nights* commentary the world of the Arabs and Muslims, despite the foreignness of their beliefs.

* * *

THIS SYMPATHY is evident in his handling of the first appearance of the jinni in the tale with which his translation—like so many others—closes the *One Thousand and One Nights*, "Maʿruf the Cobbler."

EXCERPT FROM "THE TALE OF MAʿRUF THE COBBLER"

AND THIS HAPPENED in the winter-quarter, at the time of afternoon-prayers; and when he went forth among the mounds, the rain descended upon him like streams pouring from the mouths of water-skins, and his clothes were wetted.

So he entered the ʿAʾdileeyeh, and, seeing a ruined place, in which was a deserted cell, without a door, he entered to shelter himself in it from the rain; his clothes being wetted.

Then tears descended from his eyelids, and he became oppressed in mind by his affliction, and said, Whither shall I flee from this vile woman? I pray thee, O Lord, to send to me some person who shall convey me to a distant country, whither she shall not know the way by which to reach me.

And while he was sitting weeping, lo, the wall clove asunder, and there came forth to him a person of tall stature, at the sight of whom the flesh quaked, and he said to him, O man, what aileth thee that thou hast disquieted me this night? I have been residing in this place for two hundred years, and have not seen any one enter it and do as thou hast done. Acquaint me with thy desire, and I will accomplish thine affair; for compassion for thee hath affected my heart.

Upon this he said to him, Who art thou and what mayest thou be?

And he answered him, I am the haunter of this place.

So he acquainted him with all that had happened to him with his wife; whereupon the Jinnee said to him, Dost thou desire that I should convey thee to a country whither thy wife shall know no way by which to reach thee?

He answered, yes.

And the Jinnee said to him, Mount upon my back.

Accordingly he mounted; and the Jinnee bore him and flew with him after nightfall until the rising of the dawn, when he set him down upon the summit of a high mountain, and said, O human being, descend from the top of this mountain: thou wilt see the threshold of a city, and do thou enter.

JOHN PAYNE

JOHN PAYNE HAD not thought of translating the *Thousand and One Nights* until he fell under the sway of the Pre-Raphaelites and insinuated himself into their bohemian circle in the late 1860s and 1870s. Payne, a barrister with literary ambitions, first met Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his siblings at the home of the painter Ford Madox Brown, in 1868. The house at 37 Fitzroy Square was an apt setting for such a meeting: the spacious, airy rooms with towering ceilings and roaring fires, the massive stone staircases, and the underground passages connected to vaults that resembled dungeons all gave visitors the impression of a house haunted by whispers and secrets. Madox Brown was one of the movement's first masters, as well as a teacher, mentor, and family friend of the Rossettis.

Frequenting Madox Brown's house in 1868, Payne fell in love with the painter's daughter, Emma Lucy, then twenty-five. A painter and writer, she had also modeled for Dante Gabriel. Like Payne, Lucy was a Europhile, with ambitions to translate Renaissance Italian literature. Elated to have made an entrance into the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Payne hoped for the better part of a decade to secure himself a place therein by marrying into it. The Rossettis had a keen interest in the *Arabian Nights*, with a familial tradition of regularly rereading the tales aloud. Payne's labor on the *Nights* in the late 1870s emerged out of this fascination—expressed in Christina's poetry, Lucy's painting, and Dante Gabriel's translations.

If contact with the Rossettis kindled his love of Shahrazad's tales, the mastery of the Arabic necessary to complete his translation is more of a mystery. Payne's biographer claims that by the age of nineteen, in 1861, the poet was fluent in French, Greek, and Latin and had taught himself German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. The Victorian era did produce extraordinary autodidacts, but William Wright's definitive Arabic grammar did not appear until 1862, as Robert Irwin notes in *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*. In his zeal to establish his subject's preternatural gift for languages, Payne's biographer may have done him a disservice, since by all contemporary accounts, Payne did not start studying Arabic until he began his work on the *Nights* in 1877, only four years before the first volume was set for the printer. Still, this was nothing short of miraculous. His progress invited amazement from his correspondents. In 1883, Payne published three thick volumes of his *Arabian Nights*; in 1884, another four. Payne had taken four years to complete a single volume of François Villon from French. What was his secret?

The answer likely rests in Payne's de facto collaboration with Richard Francis Burton. Payne sought out the famous adventurer, in the hope that he would add anthropological notes to his translation, and although that plan did not materialize, Burton did provide him with something even more valuable: a network of scholars who were on retainer and who made possible Burton's own supernaturally speedy version of the *Arabian Nights* in the mid-1880s, with its critical apparatus and appendices on folklore. Payne gained access to research assistants and collaborators who were fluent in Arabic, which would have allowed him to have worked, at least in part, from their glosses of the Arabic. This would help explain how he could have cobbled together the first complete rendering of the extensive Calcutta II (or Macnaghten) edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Scholars often wonder why Payne did not complain that Burton had lifted his prose for his own *Nights*. This is to ignore the evidence of their correspondence that suggests a tacit gentlemen's agreement had been made between them, and that Payne had received something in return for his complicity in Burton's ruse.

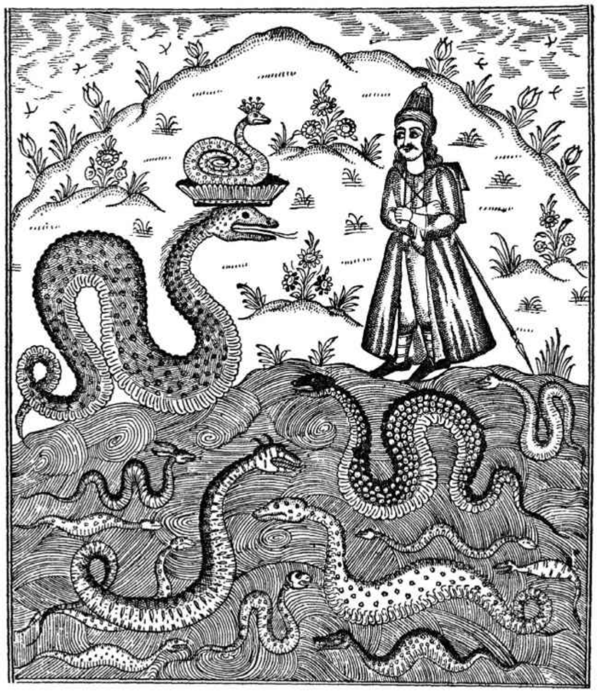
Working from a patchy command of his manuscript, Payne strived to produce a coherent work of literature. The embellished style of the Pre-

Raphaelites gave Payne what he needed. His experiments writing poetry according to Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics—particularly his attempts to write poems for operas in the manner of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems for paintings—would shape Payne's conception of the *Nights* foremost as a historical romance anchored by the figure of its most recurrent character, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Evoking the elegiacal world of Richard Wagner's "Ring Cycle," Payne affirms that the *Nights* stories are unsurpassed in their "sustained romantic exaltation" and are "masterpieces of melancholy beauty." These are tales that are like "strains that linger in the thought like the tones of the '*alte, ernste Weise*' which haunts the hearing of the dying Tristan in the greatest of musical dramas."

Payne's attempt to capture the rhythm and musical quality of the prose in the *One Thousand and One Nights* is perhaps most evident in an excerpt he rendered without paragraph breaks or punctuation (*The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Its History and Character*, vol. IX, p. 382; the words in brackets are Payne's).

EXCERPT FROM "THE QUEEN OF THE SERPENTS"

WHEN THE MORNING morrowed, he anointed the feet of him with the water the which they two had taken it from the herb and descended to the sea and went walking in it days and nights and he wondering at the horrors of the sea and the marvels of it and the rarities of it and he ceased not going upon the face of the water till he came to an island as indeed it [were] Paradise so Beloukiya went up to that island and became wondering at it and at the beauty of it and wandered in it and saw it a great island the dust of it saffron and the gravel of it cornelian and precious stones and the hedges of it jessamine and the vegetation of it the goodliest of trees and the brightest of the sweet-scented herbs and the sweetest of them and in it springs running and the brushwood of it of the Comorin aloes and the Sumatra aloes and the reeds of it sugar-cane and around it the rose and the narcissus and the amaranth and the gilly-flower and the camomile and the lily and the violet and all that in it [were] kinds and colours and the birds of it warbled upon those trees and it was fair of attributes spacious of sides abundant of good things indeed it comprised all of beauty and charms and the warbling of the birds of it [was] pleasanter than the tones [of the chanters] of the Koran and the trees of it tall and the birds of it speaking and the streams of it flowing and the springs of it running and the waters of it sweet and in it the gazelles frisked and the wild cattle came and went and the birds warbled on those branches and consoled the lover and the love-afflicted.



The story of "The Adventures of Buluqiya" is narrated by the Queen of the Serpents. She explains that Buluqiya demanded that she help him obtain a magic herb that allows humans to walk on water so that he and his companion could reach the cave where Solomon was buried beyond the seven seas. The two men hope to find Solomon's signet ring, which would enable them to rule over all the creatures of the earth and skies. Illustration from the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of One Thousand and One Nights*, illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

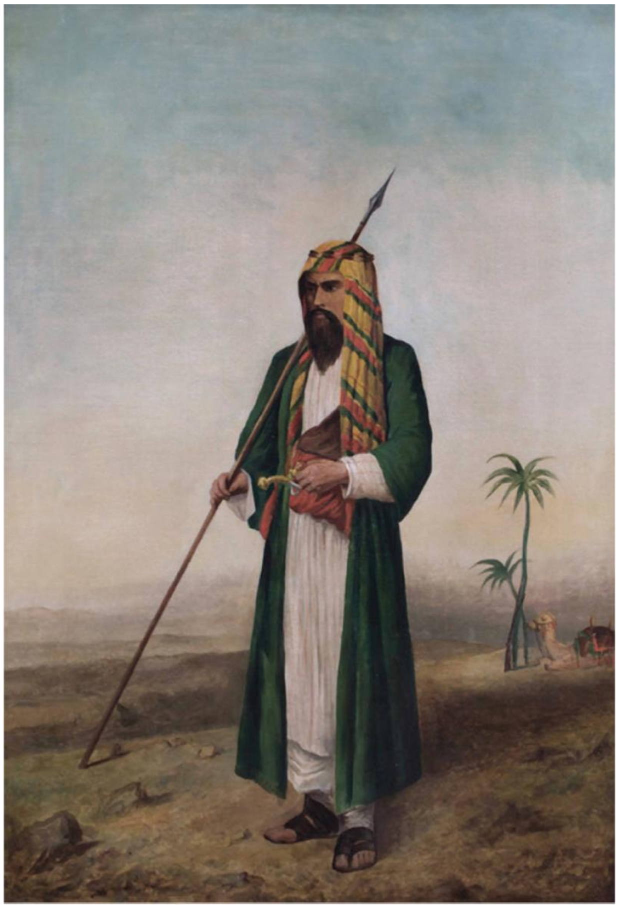
RICHARD BURTON

IN 1853, A Persian pilgrim by the name of Mirza Abdullah disembarked at the port of Alexandria on his way to Mecca. With its exquisitely polished walls, the city shone so brightly that people wore masks by day to protect themselves from the light. Some days after arriving, Mirza Abdullah appeared in the guise of a magician. He stepped into the light in the dervish's costume of gown, short shirt, and blue pantaloons. Soon he spread word that he could perform feats of divination with the aid of the "black lamp," a pool of ink poured into the palm of a young boy that could allow the boy to pierce the invisible realm of jinn.

The assumption of the disguise was part of the plan of Captain Richard Francis Burton to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina while avoiding the scorn shown to the convert—"one who has turned." The insult would have perhaps struck too close to the bone: Burton was a man of twists and turns who had adopted foreign disguises since childhood. He had traveled as an Arab of Persian descent in the Mountains of the Moon in Central Africa, where he made his greatest (and most dubious) claim, of having divined the source of the Nile. His legend as an explorer was such that he could befriend Brigham Young in Salt Lake City and Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro II in Petrópolis. He would parlay these journeys into further travelogues in which he delighted in shocking his readers, defending slavery under Islam and in the Americas, and polygamy among Muslims and Mormons.

When it came time for Burton to set out from Alexandria on the journey to Islam's most holy sites in 1853, the pilgrim/magician adopted another guise, introducing himself no longer as Mirza, but as Sheikh Abdullah. Responding to a perceived prejudice against Persians, he now presented himself as a Pathan, an Afghani born and raised in India. But discretion proved an elusive goal. A night of boozing and brawling with a new Armenian friend ruined his new name, and he departed the city under suspicion. He could never quite outrun the gossip of the bazaars, but he would treasure moments of genuine comradeship on the *haj*, such as the first sighting of Medina, where he shared the elation of his fellow pilgrims.

As he sat down to translate the *Nights* in the 1880s, Burton claimed his experience of the *haj* uniquely qualified him to translate the story collection, and his first volumes are adorned with dozens of footnotes referencing his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. In an overlooked draft of his preface to the collection, Burton suggests that the stories pulled him back into "a host of reminiscences": "I found myself even more under the diaphanous Arabian sky, in air as pure as aether." His attraction to the story collection was summarized in the word "Metempsychosis," scrawled across his copy of Lane's own preface. If Burton felt the tales of the *Arabian Nights* spoke to vague memories of a past life, the figure of Caliph Harun al-Rashid provided a more specific point of identification and fascination. In his commentary on the stories, Burton presents Baghdad under the caliph's rule as an epitome of religious, cultural, and sexual tolerance.



The Pilgrim, *an illustration from Richard Burton's* Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah, *featuring Burton in disguise (1856). Courtesy of the University of Toronto.*

The origin of Burton's *Nights* was more complex than his invocation of his pilgrimage and past lives would suggest. In performing the feat, Burton was not channeling the spirit of the desert, but rather borrowing and combining translations offered by very different authors. Embedded in Burton's version are traces of the story collection that Torrens rendered in the Masonic lodges of India, that Lane positioned within the distinct customs of Cairo, and that the untraveled Payne captured with Pre-Raphaelite musicality. Burton had few misgivings about appropriating the insights of his collaborators and precursors. Drawing on the lore of his travels, Burton styled himself the cosmopolitan interpreter of the tales, superseding the narrower visions and experiences of his predecessors.

Stealing with style, Burton took above all from Payne. Confident he had the field to himself, only a year after the publication of Payne's last volumes in 1884, Burton redoubled his commitment to a Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic, his style woven from the same fabric of beautiful words and deliberately archaic sounds and rhythms as Payne’s. Burton has been widely credited and criticized by leading scholars of translation for an approach that renders the text foreign to the target audience. The strange rhythms of his prose and his many archaisms, neologisms, and foreign loanwords provide the English reader with a sense of the cultural differences embodied in the source text. In Burton’s version of Shahrazad’s tales, the English-language reader confronts diction that is foreign, invented, and, already in Burton’s time, obsolete. The result was to make the stories of the *Nights* strange and somewhat unpalatable to his contemporaries, however much Burton’s style would appeal to writers—from Joyce through Rushdie—interested in neologisms and wordplay.

Burton’s penchant for satire and the peculiar cadence of his prose, intended to mimic the rhyming prose of the original Arabic, are particularly evident in his version of the frame tale in the story cycle of “The Hunchback.” Burton takes alliteration and rhyme to new heights to enhance the cruel humor of the initial episode, in which a tailor and his wife entertain and playfully abuse the hunchback: “Presently the Tailor’s wife took a great fid of fish and gave it in a gobbet to the Gobbo, stopping his mouth with her hand and saying, ‘By Allah thou must down with it at a single gulp; and I will not give thee time to chew it.’ So he bolted it; but therein was a stiff bone which stuck in his gullet, and his hour being come, he died.” Nowhere else in this tale does Burton concentrate rhyming sounds and words to such a degree.

Burton penned his translation in Trieste, enlarging his English vocabulary with copious borrowings from Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. The use of “gobbet” to create alliteration with the Italian for hunchback, “Gobbo,” and a rhyme with “gullet,” helps explain why James Joyce kept a copy of Burton’s *Nights* on his writing desk when composing *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in the same city two and half decades later. Yet Burton’s use of alliteration elsewhere in the tale to heighten its implicit anti-Semitism should call into question the championing of the foreign and cosmopolitan quality of his prose. There is little that marks his text more than the desire to playfully improvise upon and exaggerate the many prejudices expressed in the story collection.

A characteristic tale from the Harun al-Rashid cycle that Burton privileged in his translation and commentary is “The Sleeper and the Waker.” Burton’s title accentuates the contrast between the merchant Abu Hasan’s waking hours and the fantasy of his nights as “caliph” in the palace. Burton believed the tale inspired the episode in the second part of *Don Quixote* in which Sancho Panza is given his promised governorship as a prank.

EXCERPT FROM “THE SLEEPER AND THE WAKER”

IT HATH reached me, O auspicious King, that there was once at Baghdad, in the Caliphate of Harun al-Rashid, a man and a merchant, who had a son Abú al-Hasan-al-Khalí’a by name.

The merchant died leaving great store of wealth to his heir who divided it into two equal parts, whereof he laid up one and spent of the other half; and he fell to companying with Persians and with the sons of the merchants and he gave himself up to good drinking and good eating; till all the wealth he had with him was wasted and wantoned; whereupon he betook himself to his friends and comrades and cup-companions and expounded to them his case, discovering to them the failure of that which was in his hand of wealth. But not one of them took heed of him or even deigned answer him.

So he returned to his mother (and indeed his spirit was broken) and related to her that which had happened to him and what had befallen him from his friends, how they had neither shared with him nor requited him with speech. Quoth she, “O Abu al-Hasan, on this wise are the sons of this time: an thou have aught, they draw thee near to them, and if thou have naught, they put thee away from them.” And she went on to condole with him, what while he bewailed himself and his tears flowed and he repeated these lines:—

An wane my wealth, no man will succour me,

When my wealth waxeth all men friendly show:
How many a friend, for wealth showed friendliness
Who, when my wealth departed, turned to foe!

Then he sprang up and going to the place wherein was the other half of his good, took it and lived with it well; and he sware that he would never again consort with a single one of those he had known, but would company only with the stranger nor entertain even him but one night and that, when it morrowed, he would never know him more.

Accordingly he fell to sitting every eventide on the bridge over Tigris and looking at each one who passed by him; and if he saw him to be a stranger, he made friends with him and carried him to his house, where he conversed and caroused with him all night till morning. Then he dismissed him and would never more salute him with the Salam nor ever more drew near unto him neither invited him again.

Thus he continued to do for the space of a full year, till, one day, while he sat on the bridge, as was his wont, expecting who should come to him so he might take him and pass the night with him, behold, up came the Caliph and Masrur, the Sworder of his vengeance, disguised in merchants' dress, according to their custom. So Abu al-Hasan looked at them and rising, because he knew them not, asked them, "What say ye? Will ye go with me to my dwelling-place, so ye may eat what is ready and drink what is at hand, to wit, platter-bread and meat cooked and wine strained?"

J. C. MARDRUS

ON A SUMMER night in 1911, J. C. Mardrus saw his vision of the *Arabian Nights* made flesh in an exotic staging of a “1002nd Night” by fashion designer Paul Poiret at an eighteenth-century French estate. His decadent version of the story collection had fed the exoticism of the celebrated staging of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Schéhérazade* by the Ballets Russes in Paris. He now helped Poiret orchestrate the evening’s entertainment by drafting invitations to three hundred luminaries in dance, art, letters, and fashion for an event that unveiled a sensual fashion collection inspired by “the Orient.”

Wearing Persianate costumes inspired by his collection, guests were greeted by “slaves” dressed only in green, orange, and vermillion pantaloons of silk, and ushered toward the magnificent Solomon and his “favorite”—Poiret and his wife. A first highlight, intended to evoke a sunlit patio in Aladdin’s palace, was a sandy chamber decorated in gold and blue vellum with fountains gushing onto basins of porcelain. Guests then ascended stairs to behold Solomon and a massive gilded cage holding his favorite and his ladies-in-waiting, fitted with entertainments deemed suitable for a harem, including aquariums, mirrors, feathers, and sorbets. Poiret wore the costume he had designed for the Orientalist play *Nabuchodonosor*, and his wife wore a lampshade tunic over loose pants of light chiffon, allowing others a first peek at the “Minaret” look that later became famous throughout Paris. In the garden, on a surface composed of Persian carpets, a ballerina danced and Édouard de Max recited passages from Mardrus's *Nights*, surrounded by merchants and craftsmen at work, musicians, acrobats, parrots, and small fireworks displays.

Soon, all of Paris was under the sway of the sensual *Arabian Nights* of Mardrus, the Ballets Russes, and Poiret. The designs of Poiret freed women from the corset, clothing them in flowing and clingy designs that drew outrage from conservative critics and introducing couture trousers borrowing from the dhoti and the pantaloons. Parisians redecorated their flats with carpets and colorful cushions. "Aladin" and "Minaret" became the names of Poiret's new fragrance lines. The new color combinations of Poiret's line and Léon Bakst's famous costume designs for the dancers of the Ballets Russes inspired the jeweler Cartier to combine blue and green for the first time. In October 1927, Janet Flanner of *The New Yorker* was proclaiming that Poiret, along with his friends Bakst and Matisse, had changed "the modern retina" with a palette that had an impact well beyond avant-garde circles.

In producing a translation of the *Arabian Nights* that he claimed was based on absolute fidelity to the original, Mardrus drew on the authenticity lent to him by his heritage as an Armenian born in Cairo, his studies in Lebanon, and his work as a doctor in Morocco. When an additional manuscript source, which Mardrus claimed contained new tales and commentary, failed to materialize, Arabists, if not his artist friends, quickly realized that Mardrus's *Nights* was the least faithful of all the versions of the tales. An admirer of the decadence of Burton's version, he took even greater liberty in improvising scenes, especially when they involved sex and race. Mardrus was undoubtedly a far more gifted writer of prose and poetry than Burton, and his translation, readable and lyrical, has been reissued to this day with success.

At the level of politics, Mardrus's *Nights* echoes Burton's approach. Mardrus's prose, like Burton's commentary, introduced more homosexual episodes, with the goal of evoking a more tolerant environment. This might be seen as the influence of the translator's wife—novelist and poet Lucie Delarue-Mardrus—who played an important role in a circle of lesbian artists. Yet Mardrus's anti-Semitic and racist flourishes, like Burton's, somehow succeeded in exaggerating and surpassing the prejudices of the original story collection, and they stood as proudly regressive even by the standards of his own time. Also like Burton, Mardrus insisted in locating "the Orient" as a realm of pleasure far removed from modern European civilization. It is fitting that Mardrus's version became linked with Rimsky-Korsakov's ballet of the same year, for the emphasis in the latter was on the sexual transgressions of the opening tale of Shahriyar and his faithless wife, rather than on Shahrazad's storytelling and the store of knowledge from which it emanated.

The aesthetics of Mardrus's translation, Poiret's fashion and decor, and of Scheherazade herself, would shape Anglo-American culture in the interwar period. Beyond Edward Powys Mathers's fluent translation of Mardrus's *Nights* into English (as in the excerpt below), the influence of the decadent French translation is a constant presence in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* in C. K. Scott Moncrieff's English translation, which features a meditation on how members of an older generation who could not let go of their childhood continue to cling to Galland rather than embrace Mardrus's shocking new *Arabian Nights*.

* * *

THE SLAVE AUCTION at the opening of "The Tale of Zumurrud and 'Ali Shar" showcases the sensuality and female agency that interested Mardrus and his bohemian circle in the *Arabian Nights*. The owner is resolved that she must consent to be sold, so when a bid is made by an old man whose "beard had been dyed red to make him look younger than he really was," she extemporized the following verse:

I might have taken you, I might
Have given you respect
As to an elderly religious saint,
If you had let your beard stay white;
But now that it is decked
With scarlet paint,
You have become a horror absolute

That would make any woman drop her fruit.

Asked by the broker to choose among the assembled buyers, Zumurrud's eyes alight on ‘Ali Shar, and “a violent love for him was lighted in her heart.” She says to the broker, “I find that he is much to my taste, that his blood mingles already with mine, and that he is lighter than a breeze from the north.”

EXCERPT FROM “THE TALE OF ZUMURRUD THE BEAUTIFUL, AND OF ʿALI SHAR, SON OF GLORY”

“MY MASTER, it is great luck for you to be able to buy this treasure at a hundredth part of her true worth. I see that the Giver has not been niggardly in blessing you. May the girl bring you happiness and good fortune!”

‘Ali Shar lowered his head, laughing to himself at the irony of Destiny, and whispering, as it were, in his own ear: “As Allah lives, they think that I am rich enough to buy this slave when I cannot enter into negotiation for a crust of bread! I will say neither yes nor no, lest I be covered with shame before all these merchants.” So he cast down his eyes and did not speak.

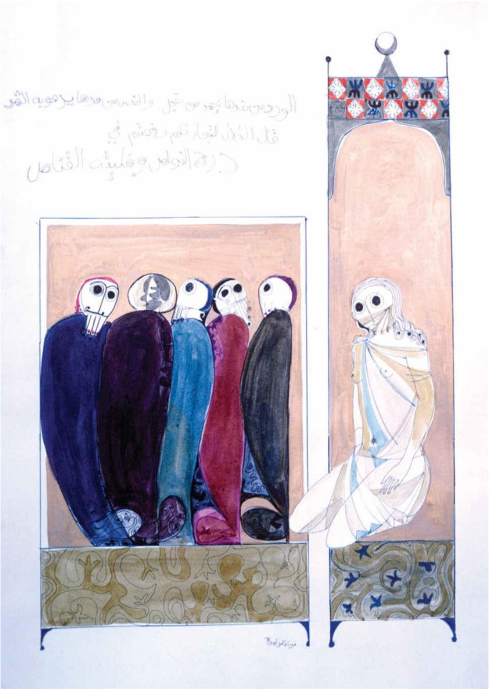
Zumurrud sent him a glance of encouragement and then, as he did not see it, said to the broker: “Lead me to him by the hand, for I wish to speak to him myself and persuade him to buy me. I am determined to belong to him and to no other.”

When the broker did as she requested, the maiden stood before the young man in all her living beauty, and said to him: “O master of my love, O youth who has lit a fire within my body, why do you not offer more, if you think that I am worth it? Or less? I wish to be your slave at any price.”

‘Ali Shar sadly shook his head, saying: “There is no obligation to buy, just as there is no obligation to sell.”

“Master of my love,” answered Zumurrud, “I see that you find the price of a thousand dinars too high; offer nine hundred and I shall belong to you.”

Then, when he continued to shake his head and say nothing, she continued: “Buy me for eight hundred,” and “Buy me for seven hundred,” and at last: “Buy me for one hundred.”



Several Nights *stories contain an episode in which a beautiful slave is purchased at a slave market, as in this drawing by Dia al-Azzawi (1967). In “The Tale of Zumurrud and ‘Ali Shar,” this episode is given a twist when the slave chooses her new master and gives him the funds to purchase her. This opening exemplifies the more dominant role that Zumurrud will play throughout the tale, as the brave and clever slave repeatedly finds ways to extricate herself from dangerous situations before her final reunion with ‘Ali Shar. Image printed with the permission of the artist.*

Said ‘Ali Shar: “I have not quite that round sum in my pocket.”

“How much do you need to make it up?” she asked, laughing. “If you cannot find the whole hundred today, you may pay later.”

“My mistress,” he replied, “I have not a hundred dinars, I have not one dinar. As Allah lives, I have no more a white piece than a red piece, a dirham of silver than a dinar of gold. You lose your time with me, go, find another buyer.”

When Zumurrud understood that the young man was without funds, she said: “Buy me. All the same. Strike me upon the arm, wrap me in your mantle, and pass one of your arms about my waist; for those are the actions of acceptance.”

‘Ali Shar hastened to do these things, and, while his arm was passing about her waist, she slipped a purse from her pocket into his hand, saying, “Here are a thousand dinars. Offer nine hundred of them to my master. And keep a hundred of them to satisfy our more pressing needs.”

So ‘Ali Shar paid nine hundred dinars to the merchant and took the slave with him to his lodging.

CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATORS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

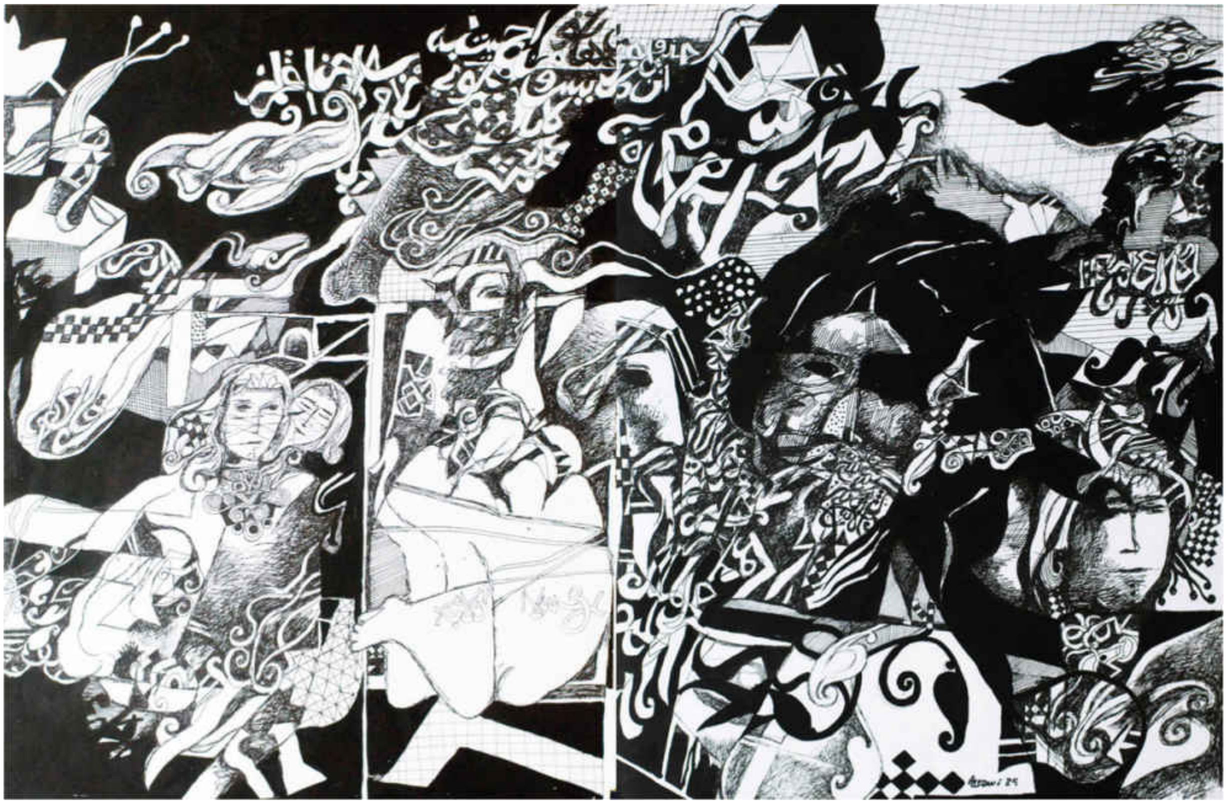
Four contemporary translators of The Thousand and One Nights *shared their views on translating the stories in the distinct cultural and political circumstances of the early twenty-first century.*

MAMEDE JAROUCHE, *who translated into Portuguese in* Livro das mil e uma noites
ELLEN WULFF, *who translated into Danish in* Tusind go én nat
ROBERTA DENARO, *who translated into Italian in* Le mille e uni notte
CLAUDIA OTT, *who translated into German in* Tausendundeine Nacht

PAULO LEMOS HORTA ***How did you come to the study of Arabic?***

MAMEDE JAROUCHE I thought I knew Arabic; my grandfather was a Lebanese Muslim migrant to Brazil, and I grew up with a knowledge of the language, or so I thought. When I was seventeen or eighteen, I had a chance to spend a year in Saudi Arabia, and I realized I spoke Lebanese—or not even Lebanese—more like a dialect from the valley my grandfather came from. Years later, this would come in handy when I edited the text of Hanna Diyab's *Book of Travels* for its first publication in Arabic in Lebanon. But this first experience made me commit to a formal study of the language. The year in Saudi was in some ways disconcerting. I had smuggled in a copy of the *Communist Manifesto*, and when I arrived, I asked myself, Where is the working class? They were all foreigners and there was no possibility to talk to them. But I loved the poetry of the language.

Later I had the chance to work for Brazilian multinational companies in Libya and Iraq and to spend time in Cairo during my studies. After I became a professor at the University of São Paulo, I returned to Cairo for a season in 2000, and it became a habit to go there every year for a couple of months, in January and February, and this coincided with my work on the *Thousand and One Nights* in the middle to late part of that decade. I liked to stay near Tahrir Square, and I was there when the Arab Spring happened in 2011, and I witnessed the revolution.



Drawing by Dia al-Azzawi, 1985; printed with the permission of the artist.

Ellen Wulff After having qualified as a schoolteacher—which enabled me to earn my living and ensured my future (or so I thought at the time)—I chose a subject completely unknown to me, wavering between Arabic and Chinese language and culture. Arabic won because of the more beautiful script.

Roberta Denaro It may sound disappointing, to myself in the first place, but there isn’t any particular family history, travel, or encounter that led me to the study of Arabic. I don’t even really remember why I enrolled in Literature, with the Oriental Languages curriculum. After graduating from the classical lyceum, an Italian high school that gives a good education in classics, it was as if I missed a piece. I wanted to broaden my perspective on that part of the ancient and medieval world whose existence the school had made me aware of but had left out of my education.

How did you come to translate The Thousand and One Nights*?*

Claudia Ott In 2004, the three-hundredth anniversary of the first translation of the *Arabian Nights* into a Western language—the famous *Les mille et une nuits* by Antoine Galland, appearing from 1704 onward—was being celebrated. For this occasion, the publisher C. H. Beck decided to publish Galland’s Arabic manuscript of the *Nights* in a German translation for the first time. Until then, all other German translations had been translated from later printed sources and not from the oldest manuscripts. We were in the lucky situation of having the Muhsin Mahdi edition as a source for translation; our colleague Ulrich Marzolph recommended me to the publisher. But I told the publisher that I would not be ready to translate the whole Mahdi edition, only up to the place where Galland’s original manuscript breaks off. I decided this because I knew that there are other manuscripts that have not been translated into German or even any other language. I didn’t want the publisher to create the impression that we have a really complete edition of the *Arabian Nights* here. So my translation has an open end, or no end at all. It was a good decision, but it startled the public.

ELLEN WULFF Before I started my studies of Arabic, I only knew of two works in Arabic: the Qur'an and the *1001 Nights*. I vowed to read both of these and later translated the Koran on my own account. Afterward, a publisher headhunted me to do the *1001 Night*s.

ROBERTA DENARO I had previous experiences of literary translation, both from Arabic and Turkish. In particular, I had already translated the Turkish poetry section of an anthology published by Donzelli, the publishing house that contracted me for the Italian translation of the Mahdi edition of the *Arabian Nights*.

MAMEDE JAROUCHE A friend of mine left the university to work for the Globo publishing house. He knew of my previous literary translations from Arabic and my interest in the *Thousand and One Nights*. One day he called me and said that they had had an editorial board meeting, and, by the way, I'd be translating the *Nights*. Fortunately, they gave me enough time and the proper conditions for the work.

What were some of the main challenges and opportunities of translating the text?

ROBERTA DENARO Translating a text such as the *Nights* requires undoubtedly a certain amount of unconsciousness, recklessness, if we consider the role it played in European culture and the caliber of the translators who dealt with it. (I am thinking, for example, of the translation coordinated by Francesco Gabrieli in 1948, which is still a reference text in Italy.) One of the initial difficulties was to find the right tone for rendering its prose. It was not easy to have lexicographic tools, because the Middle Arabic of the Mahdi edition can be dealt with only partially through the usual lexicons. In particular, a stimulating challenge derived from the translation of aspects of material culture, such as food or textile names, given their broad differences from place to place and period to period.

CLAUDIA OTT The *One Thousand and One Nights* shows strong literary contrasts among the prose narrative passages, the rhymed prose, and the poetry. It was my main challenge to let these contrasts shine through the German translation. Moreover, the old manuscript originals are far closer to daily life than the later printed versions. The use of dialect and everyday speech, even vulgarisms and dirty words, is frequent in the originals. So I tried to give these lively features an echo in the German version, too.

ELLEN WULFF Having been transmitted orally, the text has huge contrasts in language levels: low prose in narrative, high prose in the *saj'* (rhyme prose), and pure poetry. I decided to do the narrative in plain Danish: short sentences, a simple syntax, and a limited vocabulary, to respect the *saj'* and to depict the poetry in the original meters and rhymes. That was a challenge.

MAMEDE JAROUCHE You can see the work that I do [he turns monitor to show comparison of different manuscripts of the same tale]. The challenges and opportunities are all a function of the manuscripts we have. I have to say I'm becoming increasingly skeptical of the received wisdom about the distinction between the Syrian and Egyptian branches of *One Thousand and One Nights* manuscripts.

How do you think identity affects the process of translation? Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to how Emily Wilson, the first woman to translate The Odyssey *into English, emphasized different readings (of Helen, for example) when compared to previous translators.*

MAMEDE JAROUCHE I can only speak of my own experience. I did find, when I was editing Hanna Diyab's *Book of Travels* in Arabic, that I would sometimes find an expression, something very colloquial, that I only knew because I had heard it in my grandfather's voice, something very Lebanese. I found it quite moving. Certain idioms had survived, which is not surprising, because my grandfather came from a small, out-of-the-way place. It was very powerful to feel that connection to the idiom.

ROBERTA DENARO I would add that it is not in translation but in the choice of texts we translate that gender identity counts. At the moment, I am editing, together with a (male) colleague, an anthology of medieval Arabic literature, and I believe that the reasons why I selected some texts, and the perspective according to which I read them, are different from those of a male researcher.

The translator's "empathy" for the text, or the lack of it, also matters a lot, as well as the readership she/he imagines for his or her translation and, of course, the editorial revision, over which the translator sometimes does not have full control.

As far as my translation of the *1001 Nights*, no, I wouldn't say that identity matters, also because the Arabic text I worked on had no previous Italian translators for comparison. I don't want my observation to be misunderstood, but, when translating a medieval Arabic text, the gender identity of the translator is, in my opinion, a trait of secondary importance with respect to her/his linguistic sensitivity, philological skills, and, last but not least, her/his age. I translated the *Nights* in 2006, revised them in 2016, and I do think that if I had to translate them again in 2026, I would let other dimensions of the text emerge.

CLAUDIA OTT I think my translation is the most daring of all the German translations of the *Arabian Nights*, but I'm not so sure that it is because I'm a female translator. I rather guess it is because of the daring openness of my manuscript sources. As a translator, I'm always trying to create literature. But as a philologist, it is my duty to stay very close to the original texts.… I do not want to omit even one word or add even one word.

ELLEN WULFF To my knowledge, the *Thousand and One Nights* had not been translated in full in Danish. I consulted the translation of the Mahdi manuscript by Claudia Ott as well as those by Husain Haddawy and

Richard van Leeuwen. I didn’t notice a different reading, nor did I experience such a thing myself.

Did you and your publisher decide to include or exclude “Aladdin” and “Ali Baba” because they were contributed in French by Galland from the storytelling of Hanna Diyab? Have you followed the discovery of Diyab as a genuine Arab storyteller in his own right?

MAMEDE JAROUCHE What I find mind-blowing is how Diyab adapted these stories. He must have been brilliant at improvisation.

We included “Aladdin” from the text we had. Of course, if the Arabic text that Ibrahim Akel is in the process of authenticating in Paris as prepared by Diyab is indeed the real deal, I’d be interested in translating it in the future.

ELLEN WULFF My publisher and I decided to include the “orphan stories”—translated from the original French (and not by me!)—because especially “Aladdin” and “Ali Baba” are identified with the *1001 Nights* in Danish minds. These two famous stories are to be found in all editions of books for children, including our own, and are highly beloved.

CLAUDIA OTT We did not include “Aladdin” or “Ali Baba” in our translation because we lack Arabic manuscript originals, and this new translation is just supposed to translate the oldest manuscript sources. It’s very simple, really. As long as we have not found an Arabic manuscript containing “Ali Baba” and “Aladdin,” we cannot include it in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

ROBERTA DENARO The inclusion of the so-called orphan stories has been out of the question from the very beginning. In fact, the publisher’s choice was to adhere to the specific textual identity defined by the Mahdi edition of the *Nights*, deeming that this was exactly the strong point of the book.

Why does The Thousand and One Nights *play such a large role in your national literature historically?*

CLAUDIA OTT One of the most famous authors of German languages, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, was a real admirer of the *Arabian Nights*. I think his great admiration for the *Nights* also played a role in the way the *Arabian Nights* echoes throughout German literature. Even today, authors such as Thomas Lehr, Ingo Schulze, and Ulrike Draesner use quotations of *Arabian Nights* German translations; most modern authors tend to use my new translation. Thus, the *1001 Nights* is incorporated into our concept of world literature.

ELLEN WULFF Galland's translation reached Denmark a little later than it reached Germany, anonymously translated from German in the middle of the eighteenth century, and it inspired great writers such as Adam Oehlenschläger (the play *Aladdin*) and H. C. Andersen, who soon began to write his own fairy tales. Moreover, another famous writer, Christian Winther, translated a children's-book version from German in 1863, inspiring another famous writer, Karen Blixen. You never forget what others read aloud to you or read yourself and love as a child. Another reason may be the Tivoli amusement park in the middle of Copenhagen. It was founded in 1843 by Georg Carstensen, a man deeply in love with the *1001 Nights*. He even translated part of it from German and equipped the garden with all sorts of Oriental delights. Children all over Denmark have ever since loved Tivoli and the *1001 Nights*.

MAMEDE JAROUCHE I really don't know how to explain the phenomenon. In the realm of letters, *The Thousand and One Nights* has the same kind of pull and seduction as Greek mythology. When my translation came out, people kept saying there must have been a lot of advertising, but there really wasn't. The publisher thought of doing a signing, and by the time it got organized, the first volume was in its third print run. At signings and events, and in book clubs, the strong connection of women in particular to the story collection is evident.

ROBERTA DENARO I would say that the *Nights* stories have played a very different role from the one they played in modern English and French culture. I would like to note that Italian literary culture of the eighteenth century was strongly influenced by France, and for about two centuries, French culture and the Galland translation remained the main and only intermediary for Italian knowledge of the *Nights*. The first translations done directly from the Arabic text date back only to the middle of the twentieth century.

In 2015, when I was invited to chair a panel of translators of The Thousand and One Nights *at the Literaturhaus in Berlin, I was struck by the work translators had done to welcome refugees. Can you tell us a bit more about this experience?*

CLAUDIA OTT In 2015, quite a large number of Syrian refugees came to the region of Celle, where I live. I published a book for them with Arabic texts in Arabic script, transliteration, German translation and explanations, and partly even Arabic calligraphy. These *Erste Arabische Lesestücke* gave the German refugee aid workers and teachers an impression of Arabic culture and, at the same time and much more importantly, it gave the children of the refugees a first insight into their own culture. I think this was a very important challenge, and it was—and still is—quite successful.

ELLEN WULFF It is true that my Danish-Arabic dictionary sold much better in 2015 than in the previous years—and the subsequent years, for that matter. I wonder whether all those refugees ever tried to learn Danish or benefited from the dictionary in other ways. It was distributed by Dansk Flygtningehjælp (Danish Refugee Help).

MAMEDE JAROUCHE In addition to forming personal working relationships with incoming refugees, I also had an interesting experience consulting on a soap opera dealing with this experience in Brazil. You don't get everything you want, but I was able to make my voice heard and I got to choose the name of the imaginary city referred to, and other things related to language.

ROBERTA DENARO I'd like to tell you that Arabists and translators somehow played a role in the welcoming of refugees, but I'm afraid this is not the case in Italy. Only in rare cases has the public discourse on such a sensitive issue been built on specific expertise in the area.

However, recently there have been various public-engagement projects involving Arabists and specialists of the contemporary Arab world aimed at the training of civil servants working with migrants and refugees. I had the occasion, together with some colleagues at my university, of participating in some of these projects. I must say that I have always had the feeling of having come out of them enriched as a person and as a professional, and, I hope, to have contributed to a change of perspective and practices.

What is the contemporary significance of Arabic and of The Thousand and One Nights*? Are Arabists principally known for the dictionaries and phrasebooks or is there a wider interest today in translated literature from Arabic, and, in particular,* The Thousand and One Nights*?*

CLAUDIA OTT I think there is something very similar among Germans, refugees, and the international public reading the *Arabian Nights*. Everyone knows the title, everyone knows the names, everyone knows Shahrazad as a personality. But nobody knows how the story develops. When I do readings of my translation in German, people always wonder, that's not how they remember the storyline. I think something like that was happening even in the period of the development of the *Nights* itself. This title and the idea of the whole work were so famous that stories were just attracted to the collection. It was not necessary to know every story. It was not even necessary to know exactly how the frame story went. It was more important to know the idea, the image of a thousand and one nights. That was very powerful and still is today.

ELLEN WULFF Few people know other stories than those of “Aladdin” and “Ali Baba,” and few even know that the original language of the story collection is Arabic. Anyway, the work is available today in Denmark, which it hasn’t been for years, even as a children’s book, in volumes one and two. Volume three is still forthcoming. I would like to see a paperback edition of the complete work.

ROBERTA DENARO It is difficult to give an exact answer. My impression is that in Italy, Arabists are known mainly as translators, and especially as translators of contemporary Arabic fiction, which is likely to attract the interest of a wider readership than dictionaries, phrasebooks, or classical Arabic literature. Nevertheless, in this respect the *Nights*, along with the Qur’an, represent maybe the only exceptions to such lack of interest, at least judging from the publishing market.

MAMEDE JAROUCHE *The Thousand and One Nights* is seen as possessing universal value in Brazil, and this is true of Arab culture more generally. This also applies to students in my courses at the University of São Paulo in particular. Only a minority are of Arab descent or have married into an Arab family. In Brazil, *The Thousand and One Nights* is seen as part of the canon of classical literature.

V.

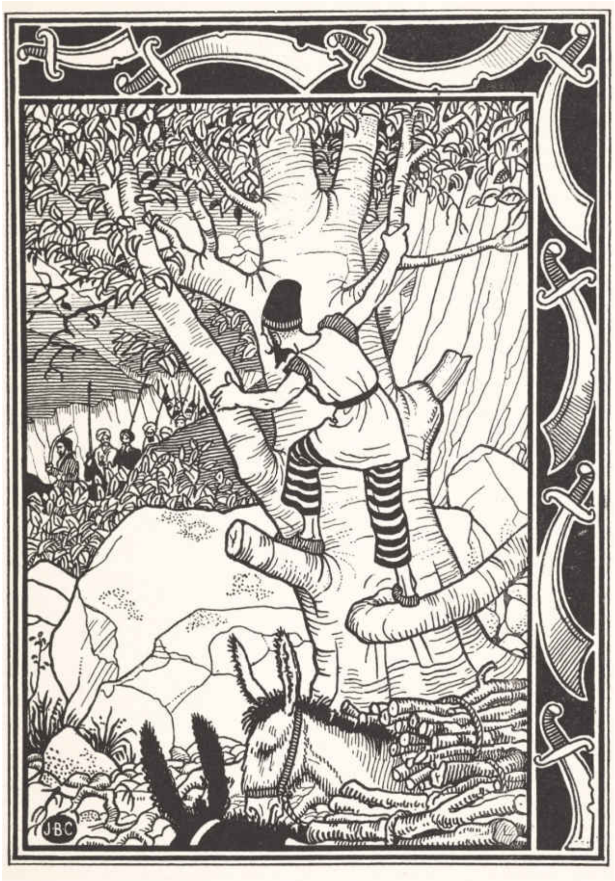
RETELLINGS OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

CHARLES DICKENS, “A CHRISTMAS TREE”

Charles Dickens had a lifelong enthusiasm for the Arabian Nights *and inserted innumerable references to the stories in his essays, novels, stories, and speeches. For Dickens, the stories were integrally linked to a sense of wonder—a quality that he believed could be nurtured in any child through the reading of fabulous fictions. The potent mixture of realistic settings and supernatural qualities in the* Nights *exercised a powerful influence on his writing as he sought to capture the marvelous in the ordinary. Dickens invoked the power of the* Arabian Nights *at a particularly critical moment in his most popular work—*A Christmas Carol. *It is only when the ghost of Christmas past shows Ebenezer Scrooge a vision of himself as a boy reading the* Arabian Nights *and a vision of Ali Baba come alive before his eyes that the character begins to reconnect with the lonely boy he once was, and the reader glimpses the potential for redemption that lies within him. In 1850, Dickens brought this spirit to “A Christmas Tree,” a story that captures the nostalgic delight of its narrator in the joys of the stories that fed his soul as a child.*

HUSH! AGAIN A forest, and somebody up in a tree—not Robin Hood, not Valentine, not the Yellow Dwarf … but an Eastern King with a glittering scimitar and turban. By Allah! two Eastern Kings, for I see another, looking over his shoulder! Down upon the grass, at the tree's foot, lies the full length of a coal-black Giant, stretched asleep, with his head in a lady's lap; and near them is a glass box, fastened with four locks of shining steel, in which he keeps the lady prisoner when he is awake. I see the four keys at his girdle now. The lady makes signs to the two kings in the tree, who softly descend. It is the setting-in of the bright Arabian Nights.

Oh, now all common things become uncommon and enchanted to me. All lamps are wonderful; all rings are talismans. Common flower-pots are full of treasure, with a little earth scattered on the top; trees are for Ali Baba to hide in; beef-steaks are to throw down into the Valley of Diamonds, that the precious stones may stick to them, and be carried by the eagles to their nests, whence the traders, with loud cries, will scare them. Tarts are made, according to the recipe of the Vizier's son of Bussorah, who turned pastrycook after he was set down in his drawers at the gate of Damascus; cobblers are all Mustaphas, and in the habit of sewing up people cut into four pieces, to whom they are taken blind-fold.



Ali Baba observes the bandits arriving. Illustration by Joseph Benwell Clark from Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves *(1896).*

Any iron ring let into stone is the entrance to a cave which only waits for the magician, and the little fire, and the necromancy, that will make the earth shake. All the dates imported come from the same tree as that unlucky date, with whose shell the merchant knocked out the eye of the genie's invisible son. All olives are of the stock of that fresh fruit, concerning which the Commander of the Faithful overheard the boy conduct the fictitious trial of the fraudulent olive merchant; all apples are akin to the apple purchased (with two others) from the Sultan's gardener for three sequins, and which the tall black slave stole from the child. All dogs are associated with the dog, really a transformed man, who jumped upon the baker's counter, and put his paw on the piece of bad money. All rice recalls the rice which the awful lady, who was a ghoule, could only peck by grains, because of her nightly feasts in the burial-place. My very rocking-horse,—there he is, with his nostrils turned completely inside-out, indicative of Blood!—should have a peg in his neck, by virtue thereof to fly away with me, as the wooden horse did with the Prince of Persia, in the sight of all his father's Court.[1]

Yes, on every object that I recognise among those upper branches of my Christmas Tree, I see this fairy light! When I wake in bed, at daybreak, on the cold, dark, winter mornings, the white snow dimly beheld, outside, through the frost on the window-pane, I hear Dinarzade. "Sister, sister, if you are yet awake, I pray you finish the history of the Young King of the Black Islands." Scheherazade replies, "If my lord the Sultan will suffer me to live another day, sister, I will not only finish that, but tell you a more wonderful story yet." Then, the gracious Sultan goes out, giving no orders for the execution, and we all three breathe again.

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1. *in the sight of all his father's Court:* The mixture of references in this paragraph is typical of the English reception of the stories of the *Arabian Nights*, where there was no attempt to distinguish between the oldest Arabic tales (such as "The Merchant and the Jinni" and "The Three Apples") and the tales added by Antoine Galland with the aid of Hanna Diyab (like "The Enchanted Horse" and "The Tale of Sidi Numan").

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI, “GOBLIN MARKET”

Christina Rossetti had found inspiration in “The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad” for an early poem, “The Dead City” (1847), which borrows its fruit imagery from the market scene in the frame of the tale and its theme of the enchanted city from “The Tale of the First Woman, the Owner.” But her most famous poem, “Goblin Market” (1862), draws even more extensively on the Arabian Nights *tale. The description of the goblin market, particularly the list of fruits on offer, strongly resembles the long list of the youngest lady of Baghdad’s purchases in the city’s market. The goblins’ acceptance of a lock of hair and a tear as payment from Laura, and their refusal of Lizzie’s coin, recalls another market scene from “The Tale of the Second Woman, the Keeper,” where a merchant selling silk refuses the woman’s money, demanding a kiss instead. Drawing upon the imagery of Baghdad’s market and the scenario of the young sisters living together, Rossetti weaves her powerful narrative of the sexual discovery of the sisters Laura and Lizzie.*

In turn, the Pre-Raphaelite poet John Payne, a minor member of the wider Rossetti circle, drew from Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” in his translation of The Thousand and One Nights. *In his description of the porter “toying and kissing and biting and handling and groping and dallying and taking liberties” with the ladies of Baghdad, there are* *distinct echoes of the goblins hugging and kissing, squeezing and caressing Lizzie. Payne associated verse in the* Arabian Nights *with Christina Rossetti's poetry, and the nature of her own recourse to the* Nights *informed his project of producing a version of the* Nights *that included the eros.*

* * *

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpeck'd cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,

Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.”

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bow’d her head to hear,
Lizzie veil’d her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
“Lie close,” Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
“We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?”
“Come buy,” call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.

“Oh,” cried Lizzie, “Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.”
Lizzie cover’d up her eyes,
Cover’d close lest they should look;
Laura rear’d her glossy head,

And whisper’d like the restless brook:
“Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes.”
“No,” said Lizzie, “No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.”
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat’s face,
One whisk’d a tail,
One tramp’d at a rat’s pace,
One crawl’d like a snail,
One like a wombat prowl’d obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretch’d her gleaming neck

Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turn’d and troop’d the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
“Come buy, come buy.”
When they reach’d where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One rear’d his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heav’d the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
“Come buy, come buy,” was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Long’d but had no money:
The whisk-tail’d merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr’d,
The rat-faced spoke a word

Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried “Pretty Goblin” still for “Pretty Polly;”—
One whistled like a bird.

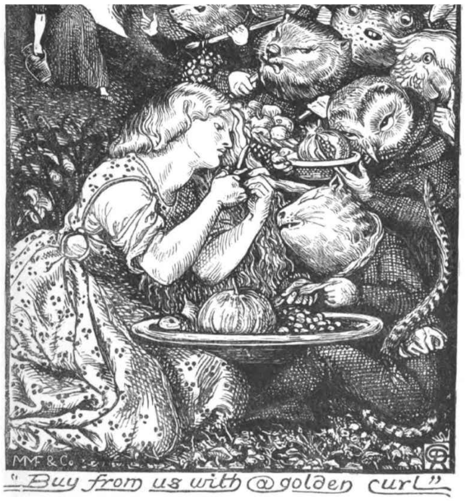

MF&Co.
“Buy from us with a golden curl.”

Illustration by Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti, produced to accompany the reprinting of “The Goblin Market.” From Goblin Market, The Prince’s Progress, and Other Poems *(London, 1879)*

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
“Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather.”
“You have much gold upon your head,”
They answer’d all together:
“Buy from us with a golden curl.”
She clipp’d a precious golden lock,
She dropp’d a tear more rare than pearl,

Then suck’d their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flow’d that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She suck’d and suck’d and suck’d the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She suck’d until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gather’d up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turn’d home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
“Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck’d from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;

Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.”
“Nay, hush,” said Laura:
“Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;” and kiss’d her:
“Have done with sorrow;
I’ll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

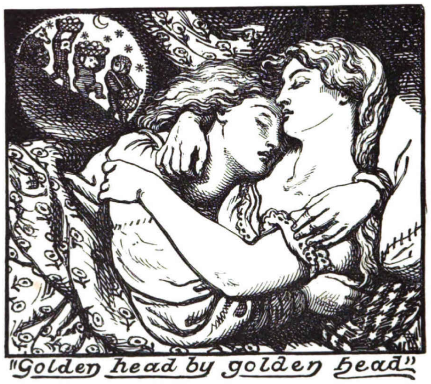

"Golden head by golden head"

Illustration by Dante Gabriel Rossetti to accompany "The Goblin Market" by Christina Rossetti.

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crow'd his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,

Air’d and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churn’d butter, whipp’d up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sew’d;
Talk’d as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day’s delight,
One longing for the night.
At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck’d purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: “The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep.”
But Laura loiter’d still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fall’n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
“Come buy, come buy,”

With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, “O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?”

Laura turn’d cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
“Come buy our fruits, come buy.”
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life droop’d from the root:

She said not one word in her heart’s sore ache;
But peering thro’ the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudg’d home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnash’d her teeth for baulk’d desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
“Come buy, come buy;”—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon wax’d bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dew’d it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watch’d for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth

She dream’d of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crown’d trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetch’d honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister’s cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins’ cry:
“Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy;”—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The yoke and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Long’d to buy fruit to comfort her,
But fear’d to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,

In earliest winter time
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seem’d knocking at Death’s door:
Then Lizzie weigh’d no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kiss’d Laura, cross’d the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laugh’d every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,

Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugg’d her and kiss’d her:
Squeez’d and caress’d her:
Stretch’d up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
“Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs.”—

“Good folk,” said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
“Give me much and many:—
Held out her apron,
Toss’d them her penny.
“Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,”
They answer’d grinning:
“Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,

Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry:
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us.”—
“Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I toss’d you for a fee.”—
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One call’d her proud,
Cross-grain’d, uncivil;
Their tones wax’d loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbow’d and jostled her,
Claw’d with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soil’d her stocking,
Twitch’d her hair out by the roots,

Stamp’d upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeez’d their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-vein’d stone
Lash’d by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crown’d orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topp’d with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguer’d by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuff’d and caught her,
Coax’d and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratch’d her, pinch’d her black as ink,
Kick’d and knock’d her,
Maul’d and mock’d her,
Lizzie utter’d not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:

But laugh’d in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrupp’d all her face,
And lodg’d in dimples of her chin,
And streak’d her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kick’d their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writh’d into the ground,
Some div’d into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanish’d in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro’ the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she fear’d some goblin man
Dogg’d her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin scurried after,
Nor was she prick’d by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced

That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, “Laura,” up the garden,
“Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeez’d from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men.”

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutch’d her hair:
“Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruin’d in my ruin,
Thirsty, canker’d, goblin-ridden?”—
She clung about her sister,
Kiss’d and kiss’d and kiss’d her:
Tears once again
Refresh’d her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain

After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kiss’d and kiss’d her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loath’d the feast:
Writhing as one possess’d she leap’d and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks stream’d like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knock’d at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense fail’d in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree

Spun about,
Like a foam-topp’d waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watch’d by her,
Counted her pulse’s flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cool’d her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirp’d about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bow’d in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Open’d of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laugh’d in the innocent old way,
Hugg’d Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks show’d not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;

Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
“For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE, “THE THOUSAND-AND-SECOND TALE OF SCHEHERAZADE”

In Edgar Allan Poe’s “Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade” (published in 1845), the storyteller of the Arabian Nights *relates a final tale of Sinbad the Sailor that strains the credulity of King Shahriyar. An aged Sinbad encounters a “horrible creature” that the reader recognizes as a steamship infested with “man-animals” that turn out to be Cockney sailors. Aboard this English ship, Sinbad circumnavigates the globe, finding all manner of wonders. As Poe’s original footnotes in the story explain, many of these wonders represent real phenomena known to Poe’s contemporaries. Some of these are curiosities of nature, such as the petrified forest near Cairo, a volcano in Iceland, a sunken forest in Venezuela, and plant species that grow upon living animals. The most inconceivable wonders, however, are technological marvels. In addition to the steamship, Sinbad is amazed by a hot-air balloon, a train, a telegraph machine, an automaton, an early calculator, the first photographs, and a range of scientific feats. To Sinbad, these devices are magical and the men who employ them are magicians, but Shahriyar has no patience for such things.*

Poe provided his own explanatory notes to the story. The notes that follow in the text are his.

Truth is stranger than fiction.

OLD SAYING

HAVING HAD OCCASION, lately, in the course of some Oriental investigations, to consult the *Tellmenow Isitsöornot*, a work which (like the Zohar of Simeon Jochaides) is scarcely known at all, even in Europe; and which has never been quoted, to my knowledge, by any American—if we except, perhaps, the author of the "Curiosities of American Literature"; —having had occasion, I say, to turn over some pages of the first-mentioned very remarkable work, I was not a little astonished to discover that the literary world has hitherto been strangely in error respecting the fate of the vizier's daughter, Scheherazade, as that fate is depicted in the "Arabian Nights"; and that the denouement there given, if not altogether inaccurate, as far as it goes, is at least to blame in not having gone very much farther.

For full information on this interesting topic, I must refer the inquisitive reader to the "Isitsöornot" itself, but in the meantime, I shall be pardoned for giving a summary of what I there discovered.

It will be remembered, that, in the usual version of the tales, a certain monarch having good cause to be jealous of his queen, not only puts her to death, but makes a vow, by his beard and the prophet, to espouse each night the most beautiful maiden in his dominions, and the next morning to deliver her up to the executioner.

Having fulfilled this vow for many years to the letter, and with a religious punctuality and method that conferred great credit upon him as a man of devout feeling and excellent sense, he was interrupted one afternoon (no doubt at his prayers) by a visit from his grand vizier, to whose daughter, it appears, there had occurred an idea.

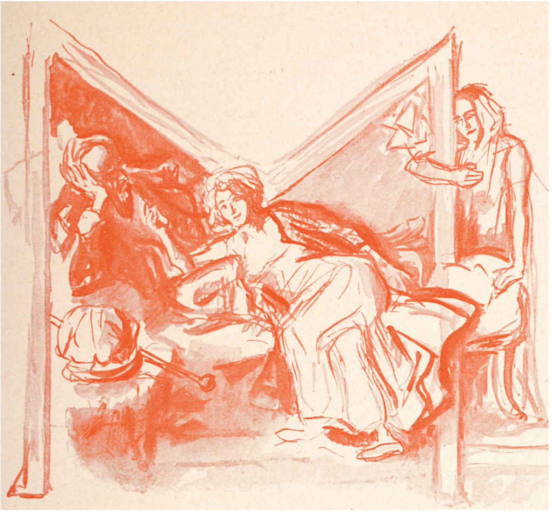
Her name was Scheherazade, and her idea was, that she would either redeem the land from the depopulating tax upon its beauty, or perish, after the approved fashion of all heroines, in the attempt.

Accordingly, and although we do not find it to be leap-year (which makes the sacrifice more meritorious), she deputes her father, the grand vizier, to make an offer to the king of her hand. This hand the king eagerly accepts (he had intended to take it at all events, and had put off the matter from day to day, only through fear of the vizier), but, in accepting it now, he gives all parties very distinctly to understand, that, grand vizier or no grand vizier, he has not the slightest design of giving up one iota of his vow or of his privileges. When, therefore, the fair Scheherazade insisted upon marrying the king, and did actually marry him despite her father's excellent advice not to do any thing of the kind—when she would and did marry him, I say, will I, nill I, it was with her beautiful black eyes as thoroughly open as the nature of the case would allow.

It seems, however, that this politic damsel (who had been reading Machiavelli, beyond doubt), had a very ingenious little plot in her mind. On the night of the wedding, she contrived, upon I forget what specious pretence, to have her sister occupy a couch sufficiently near that of the royal pair to admit of easy conversation from bed to bed; and, a little before cock-crowing, she took care to awaken the good monarch, her husband (who bore her none the worse will because he intended to wring her neck on the morrow,)—she managed to awaken him, I say, (although on account of a capital conscience and an easy digestion, he slept well,) by the profound interest of a story (about a rat and a black cat, I think) which she was narrating (all in an undertone, of course) to her sister. When the day broke, it so happened that this history was not altogether finished, and that Scheherazade, in the nature of things could not finish it just then, since it was high time for her to get up and be bowstrung—a thing very little more pleasant than hanging, only a trifle more genteel.

The king's curiosity, however, prevailing, I am sorry to say, even over his sound religious principles, induced him for this once to postpone the fulfilment of his vow until next morning, for the purpose and with the hope of hearing that night how it fared in the end with the black cat (a black cat, I think it was) and the rat.

The night having arrived, however, the lady Scheherazade not only put the finishing stroke to the black cat and the rat (the rat was blue) but before she well knew what she was about, found herself deep in the intricacies of a narration, having reference (if I am not altogether mistaken) to a pink horse (with green wings) that went, in a violent manner, by clockwork, and was wound up with an indigo key. With this history the king was even more profoundly interested than with the other—and, as the day broke before its conclusion (notwithstanding all the queen's endeavors to get through with it in time for the bowstringing), there was again no resource but to postpone that ceremony as before, for twenty-four hours. The next night there happened a similar accident with a similar result; and then the next—and then again the next; so that, in the end, the good monarch, having been unavoidably deprived of all opportunity to keep his vow during a period of no less than one thousand and one nights, either forgets it altogether by the expiration of this time, or gets himself absolved of it in the regular way, or (what is more probable) breaks it outright, as well as the head of his father confessor. At all events, Scheherazade, who, being lineally descended from Eve, fell heir, perhaps, to the whole seven baskets of talk, which the latter lady, we all know, picked up from under the trees in the garden of Eden—Scheherazade, I say, finally triumphed, and the tariff upon beauty was repealed.



Sheherazade. Illustration by Max Slevogt from Ali Baba und die vierzig Räuber *(Berlin, 1903).*

Now, this conclusion (which is that of the story as we have it upon record) is, no doubt, excessively proper and pleasant—but alas! like a great many pleasant things, is more pleasant than true, and I am indebted altogether to the "Isitsöornot" for the means of correcting the error. "*Le mieux*," says a French proverb, "*est l'ennemi du bien*," and, in mentioning that Scheherazade had inherited the seven baskets of talk, I should have added that she put them out at compound interest until they amounted to seventy-seven.

"My dear sister," said she, on the thousand-and-second night, (I quote the language of the "Isitsöornot" at this point, verbatim) "my dear sister," said she, "now that all this little difficulty about the bowstring has blown over, and that this odious tax is so happily repealed, I feel that I have been guilty of great indiscretion in withholding from you and the king (who I am sorry to say, snores—a thing no gentleman would do) the full conclusion of Sinbad the sailor. This person went through numerous other and more interesting adventures than those which I related; but the truth is, I felt sleepy on the particular night of their narration, and so was seduced into cutting them short—a grievous piece of misconduct, for which I only trust that Allah will forgive me. But even yet it is not too late to remedy my great neglect—and as soon as I have given the king a pinch or two in order to wake him up so far that he may stop making that horrible noise, I will forthwith entertain you (and him if he pleases) with the sequel of this very remarkable story.

Hereupon the sister of Scheherazade, as I have it from the "Isitsöornot," expressed no very particular intensity of gratification; but the king, having been sufficiently pinched, at length ceased snoring, and finally said, "hum!" and then "hoo!" when the queen, understanding these words (which are no doubt Arabic) to signify that he was all attention, and would do his best not to snore any more—the queen, I say, having arranged these matters to her satisfaction, re-entered thus, at once, into the history of Sinbad the sailor:

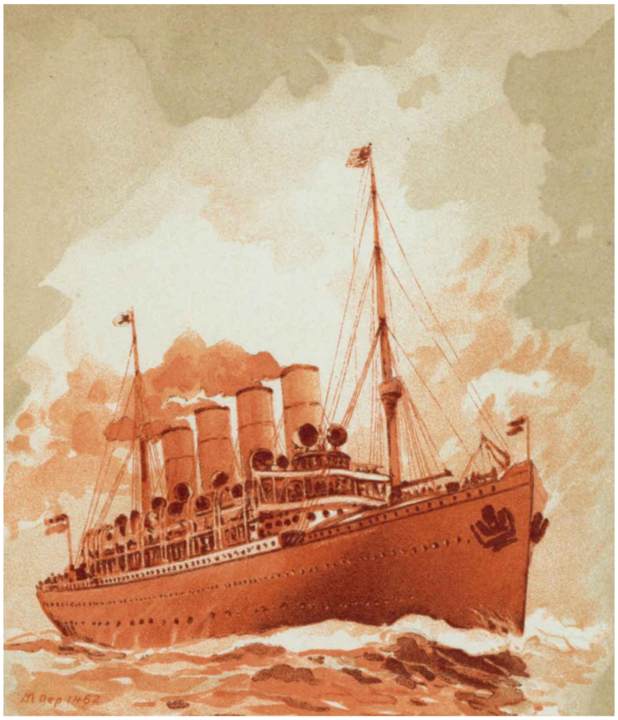
"'At length, in my old age, [these are the words of Sinbad himself, as retailed by Scheherazade]—'at length, in my old age, and after enjoying many years of tranquillity at home, I became once more possessed of a desire of visiting foreign countries; and one day, without acquainting any of my family with my design, I packed up some bundles of such merchandise as was most precious and least bulky, and, engaged a porter to carry them, went with him down to the sea-shore, to await the arrival of any chance vessel that might convey me out of the kingdom into some region which I had not as yet explored.

“‘Having deposited the packages upon the sands, we sat down beneath some trees, and looked out into the ocean in the hope of perceiving a ship, but during several hours we saw none whatever. At length I fancied that I could hear a singular buzzing or humming sound; and the porter, after listening awhile, declared that he also could distinguish it. Presently it grew louder, and then still louder, so that we could have no doubt that the object which caused it was approaching us. At length, on the edge of the horizon, we discovered a black speck, which rapidly increased in size until we made it out to be a vast monster, swimming with a great part of its body above the surface of the sea. It came toward us with inconceivable swiftness, throwing up huge waves of foam around its breast, and illuminating all that part of the sea through which it passed, with a long line of fire that extended far off into the distance.

“‘As the thing drew near we saw it very distinctly. Its length was equal to that of three of the loftiest trees that grow, and it was as wide as the great hall of audience in your palace, O most sublime and munificent of the Caliphs. Its body, which was unlike that of ordinary fishes, was as solid as a rock, and of a jetty blackness throughout all that portion of it which floated above the water, with the exception of a narrow blood-red streak that completely begirdled it. The belly, which floated beneath the surface, and of which we could get only a glimpse now and then as the monster rose and fell with the billows, was entirely covered with metallic scales, of a color like that of the moon in misty weather. The back was flat and nearly white, and from it there extended upwards of six spines, about half the length of the whole body.

“‘The horrible creature had no mouth that we could perceive, but, as if to make up for this deficiency, it was provided with at least four score of eyes, that protruded from their sockets like those of the green dragon-fly, and were arranged all around the body in two rows, one above the other, and parallel to the blood-red streak, which seemed to answer the purpose of an eyebrow. Two or three of these dreadful eyes were much larger than the others, and had the appearance of solid gold.

“‘Although this beast approached us, as I have before said, with the greatest rapidity, it must have been moved altogether by necromancy—for it had neither fins like a fish nor web-feet like a duck, nor wings like the seashell which is blown along in the manner of a vessel; nor yet did it writhe itself forward as do the eels. Its head and its tail were shaped precisely alike, only, not far from the latter, were two small holes that served for nostrils, and through which the monster puffed out its thick breath with prodigious violence, and with a shrieking, disagreeable noise.



“It had neither fins like a fish nor web-feet like a duck.” Image from Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

“‘Our terror at beholding this hideous thing was very great, but it was even surpassed by our astonishment, when upon getting a nearer look, we perceived upon the creature’s back a vast number of animals about the size and shape of men, and altogether much resembling them, except that they wore no garments (as men do), being supplied (by nature, no doubt) with an ugly uncomfortable covering, a good deal like cloth, but fitting so tight to the skin, as to render the poor wretches laughably awkward, and put them apparently to severe pain. On the very tips of their heads were certain square-looking boxes, which, at first sight, I thought might have been intended to answer as turbans, but I soon discovered that they were excessively heavy and solid, and I therefore concluded they were contrivances designed, by their great weight, to keep the heads of the animals steady and safe upon their shoulders. Around the necks of the creatures were fastened black collars, (badges of servitude, no doubt,) such as we keep on our dogs, only much wider and infinitely stiffer, so that it was quite impossible for these poor victims to move their heads in any direction without moving the body at the same time; and thus they were doomed to perpetual contemplation of their noses—a view puggish and snubby in a wonderful, if not positively in an awful degree.

"'When the monster had nearly reached the shore where we stood, it suddenly pushed out one of its eyes to a great extent, and emitted from it a terrible flash of fire, accompanied by a dense cloud of smoke, and a noise that I can compare to nothing but thunder. As the smoke cleared away, we saw one of the odd man-animals standing near the head of the large beast with a trumpet in his hand, through which (putting it to his mouth) he presently addressed us in loud, harsh, and disagreeable accents, that, perhaps, we should have mistaken for language, had they not come altogether through the nose.

"'Being thus evidently spoken to, I was at a loss how to reply, as I could in no manner understand what was said; and in this difficulty I turned to the porter, who was near swooning through affright, and demanded of him his opinion as to what species of monster it was, what it wanted, and what kind of creatures those were that so swarmed upon its back. To this the porter replied, as well as he could for trepidation, that he had once before heard of this sea-beast; that it was a cruel demon, with bowels of sulphur and blood of fire, created by evil genii as the means of inflicting misery upon mankind; that the things upon its back were vermin, such as sometimes infest cats and dogs, only a little larger and more savage; and that these vermin had their uses, however evil—for, through the torture they caused the beast by their nibbling and stingings, it was goaded into that degree of wrath which was requisite to make it roar and commit ill, and so fulfil the vengeful and malicious designs of the wicked genii.

"'This account determined me to take to my heels, and, without once even looking behind me, I ran at full speed up into the hills, while the porter ran equally fast, although nearly in an opposite direction, so that, by these means, he finally made his escape with my bundles, of which I have no doubt he took excellent care—although this is a point I cannot determine, as I do not remember that I ever beheld him again.

"'For myself, I was so hotly pursued by a swarm of the men-vermin (who had come to the shore in boats) that I was very soon overtaken, bound hand and foot, and conveyed to the beast, which immediately swam out again into the middle of the sea.

"'I now bitterly repented my folly in quitting a comfortable home to peril my life in such adventures as this; but regret being useless, I made the best of my condition, and exerted myself to secure the goodwill of the man-animal that owned the trumpet, and who appeared to exercise authority over his fellows. I succeeded so well in this endeavor that, in a few days, the creature bestowed upon me various tokens of his favor, and in the end even went to the trouble of teaching me the rudiments of what it was vain enough to denominate its language; so that, at length, I was enabled to converse with it readily, and came to make it comprehend the ardent desire I had of seeing the world.

"'Washish squashish squeak, Sinbad, hey-diddle diddle, grunt unt grumble, hiss, fiss, whiss,' said he to me, one day after dinner—but I beg a thousand pardons, I had forgotten that your majesty is not conversant with the dialect of the Cock-neighs (so the man-animals were called; I presume because their language formed the connecting link between that of the horse and that of the rooster). With your permission, I will translate. 'Washish squashish,' and so forth:—that is to say, 'I am happy to find, my dear Sinbad, that you are really a very excellent fellow; we are now about doing a thing which is called circumnavigating the globe; and since you are so desirous of seeing the world, I will strain a point and give you a free passage upon back of the beast.'"

When the Lady Scheherazade had proceeded thus far, relates the "Isitsöornot," the king turned over from his left side to his right, and said:

"It is, in fact, very surprising, my dear queen, that you omitted, hitherto, these latter adventures of Sinbad. Do you know I think them exceedingly entertaining and strange?"

The king having thus expressed himself, we are told, the fair Scheherazade resumed her history in the following words:

"Sinbad went on in this manner with his narrative to the caliph—'I thanked the man-animal for its kindness, and soon found myself very much at home on the beast, which swam at a prodigious rate through the ocean; although the surface of the latter is, in that part of the world, by no means flat, but round like a pomegranate, so that we went—so to say—either up hill or down hill all the time.'"

"That I think, was very singular," interrupted the king.

"Nevertheless, it is quite true," replied Scheherazade.

"I have my doubts," rejoined the king; "but, pray, be so good as to go on with the story."

"I will," said the queen. "'The beast,' continued Sinbad to the caliph, 'swam, as I have related, up hill and down hill until, at length, we arrived at an island, many hundreds of miles in circumference, but which, nevertheless, had been built in the middle of the sea by a colony of little things like caterpillars.'"[1]

"Hum!" said the king.

"'Leaving this island,' said Sinbad—(for Scheherazade, it must be understood, took no notice of her husband's ill-mannered ejaculation) 'leaving this island, we came to another where the forests were of solid stone, and so hard that they shivered to pieces the finest-tempered axes with which we endeavoured to cut them down.'"[2]

"Hum!" said the king, again; but Scheherazade, paying him no attention, continued in the language of Sinbad.

"'Passing beyond this last island, we reached a country where there was a cave that ran to the distance of thirty or forty miles within the bowels of the earth, and that contained a greater number of far more spacious and more magnificent palaces than are to be found in all Damascus and Bagdad. From the roofs of these palaces there hung myriads of gems, like diamonds, but larger than men; and in among the streets of towers and pyramids and temples, there flowed immense rivers as black as ebony, and swarming with fish that had no eyes.'"[3]

"Hum!" said the king.

"'We then swam into a region of the sea where we found a lofty mountain, down whose sides there streamed torrents of melted metal, some of which were twelve miles wide and sixty miles long;[4] while from an abyss on the summit, issued so vast a quantity of ashes that the sun was entirely blotted out from the heavens, and it became darker than the darkest midnight; so that when we were even at the distance of a hundred and fifty miles from the mountain, it was impossible to see the whitest object, however close we held it to our eyes.'"[5]

"Hum!" said the king.

"'After quitting this coast, the beast continued his voyage until we met with a land in which the nature of things seemed reversed—for we here saw a great lake, at the bottom of which, more than a hundred feet beneath the surface of the water, there flourished in full leaf a forest of tall and luxuriant trees.'"[6]

"Hoo!" said the king.

"Some hundred miles farther on brought us to a climate where the atmosphere was so dense as to sustain iron or steel, just as our own does feather.'"[7]

"Fiddle de dee," said the king.

"'Proceeding still in the same direction, we presently arrived at the most magnificent region in the whole world. Through it there meandered a glorious river for several thousands of miles. This river was of unspeakable depth, and of a transparency richer than that of amber. It was from three to six miles in width; and its banks which arose on either side to twelve hundred feet in perpendicular height, were crowned with ever-blossoming trees and perpetual sweet-scented flowers, that made the whole territory one gorgeous garden; but the name of this luxuriant land was the Kingdom of Horror, and to enter it was inevitable death'"[8]

"Humph!" said the king.

"'We left this kingdom in great haste, and, after some days, came to another, where we were astonished to perceive myriads of monstrous animals with horns resembling scythes upon their heads. These hideous beasts dig for themselves vast caverns in the soil, of a funnel shape, and line the sides of them with rocks, so disposed one upon the other that they fall instantly, when trodden upon by other animals, thus precipitating them into the monster's dens, where their blood is immediately sucked, and their carcasses afterwards hurled contemptuously out to an immense distance from "the caverns of death.'"[9]

"Pooh!" said the king.

"'Continuing our progress, we perceived a district with vegetables that grew not upon any soil but in the air.[10] There were others that sprang from the substance of other vegetables;[11] others that derived their substance from the bodies of living animals;[12] and then again, there were others that glowed all over with intense fire;[13] others that moved from place to place at pleasure,[14] and what was still more wonderful, we discovered flowers that lived and breathed and moved their limbs at will and had, moreover, the detestable passion of mankind for enslaving other creatures, and confining them in horrid and solitary prisons until the fulfillment of appointed tasks.'"[15]

"Pshaw!" said the king.

"'Quitting this land, we soon arrived at another in which the bees and the birds are mathematicians of such genius and erudition, that they give daily instructions in the science of geometry to the wise men of the empire. The king of the place having offered a reward for the solution of two very difficult problems, they were solved upon the spot—the one by the bees, and the other by the birds; but the king keeping their solution a secret, it was only after the most profound researches and labor, and the writing of an infinity of big books, during a long series of years, that the men-mathematicians at length arrived at the identical solutions which had been given upon the spot by the bees and by the birds.'"[16]

During the latter part of the last century, the question arose among mathematicians—"to determine the best form that can be given to the sails of a windmill, according to their varying distances from the revolving vanes, and likewise from the centres of the revolution." This is an excessively complex problem, for it is, in other words, to find the best possible position at an infinity of varied distances, and at an infinity of points on the arm. There were a thousand futile attempts to answer the query on the part of the most illustrious mathematicians; and when, at length, an undeniable solution was discovered, men found that the wing of a bird had given it with absolute precision ever since the first bird had traversed the air.

"Oh my!" said the king.

"'We had scarcely lost sight of this empire when we found ourselves close upon another, from whose shores there flew over our heads a flock of fowls a mile in breadth, and two hundred and forty miles long; so that, although they flew a mile during every minute, it required no less than four hours for the whole flock to pass over us—in which there were several millions of millions of fowl.'"[17]

"Oh fy!" said the king.

"'No sooner had we got rid of these birds, which occasioned us great annoyance, than we were terrified by the appearance of a fowl of another kind, and infinitely larger than even the rocs which I met in my former voyages; for it was bigger than the biggest of the domes on your seraglio, oh, most Munificent of Caliphs. This terrible fowl had no head that we could perceive, but was fashioned entirely of belly, which was of a prodigious fatness and roundness, of a soft-looking substance, smooth, shining and striped with various colors. In its talons, the monster was bearing away to his eyrie in the heavens, a house from which it had knocked off the roof, and in the interior of which we distinctly saw human beings, who, beyond doubt, were in a state of frightful despair at the horrible fate which awaited them. We shouted with all our might, in the hope of frightening the bird into letting go of its prey, but it merely gave a snort or puff, as if of rage and then let fall upon our heads a heavy sack which proved to be filled with sand!'"

"Stuff!" said the king.

"'It was just after this adventure that we encountered a continent of immense extent and prodigious solidity, but which, nevertheless, was supported entirely upon the back of a sky-blue cow that had no fewer than four hundred horns.'"[18]

"That, now, I believe," said the king, "because I have read something of the kind before, in a book."

"'We passed immediately beneath this continent, (swimming in between the legs of the cow,) and, after some hours, found ourselves in a wonderful country indeed, which, I was informed by the man-animal, was his own native land, inhabited by things of his own species. This elevated the man-animal very much in my esteem, and in fact, I now began to feel ashamed of the contemptuous familiarity with which I had treated him; for I found that the man-animals in general were a nation of the most powerful magicians, who lived with worms in their brain,[19] which, no doubt, served to stimulate them by their painful writhings and wrigglings to the most miraculous efforts of imagination!'"

“Nonsense!” said the king.

“‘Among these magicians were domesticated several animals of very singular kinds; for example, there was a huge horse whose bones were iron and whose blood was boiling water. In place of corn, he had black stones for his usual food; and yet, in spite of so hard a diet, he was so strong and swift that he would drag a load more weighty than the grandest temple in this city, at a rate surpassing that of the flight of most birds.’”[20]

“Twattle!” said the king.

“‘I saw, also, among these people a hen without feathers, but bigger than a camel; instead of flesh and bone she had iron and brick; her blood, like that of the horse, (to whom, in fact, she was nearly related,) was boiling water; and like him she ate nothing but wood or black stones. This hen brought forth very frequently, a hundred chickens in the day; and, after birth, they took up their residence for several weeks within the stomach of their mother.’”[21]

“Fa! lal!” said the king.

“‘One of this nation of mighty conjurors created a man out of brass and wood, and leather, and endowed him with such ingenuity that he would have beaten at chess, all the race of mankind with the exception of the great Caliph, Haroun Alraschid.[22] Another of these magi constructed (of like material) a creature that put to shame even the genius of him who made it; for so great were its reasoning powers that, in a second, it performed calculations of so vast an extent that they would have required the united labor of fifty thousand fleshy men for a year.[23] But a still more wonderful conjuror fashioned for himself a mighty thing that was neither man nor beast, but which had brains of lead, intermixed with a black matter like pitch, and fingers that it employed with such incredible speed and dexterity that it would have had no trouble in writing out twenty thousand copies of the Koran in an hour, and this with so exquisite a precision, that in all the copies there should not be found one to vary from another by the breadth of the finest hair. This thing was of prodigious strength, so that it erected or overthrew the mightiest empires at a breath; but its powers were exercised equally for evil and for good.’”

“Ridiculous!” said the king.

"'Among this nation of necromancers there was also one who had in his veins the blood of the salamanders; for he made no scruple of sitting down to smoke his chibouc in a red-hot oven until his dinner was thoroughly roasted upon its floor.[24] Another had the faculty of converting the common metals into gold, without even looking at them during the process.[25] Another had such a delicacy of touch that he made a wire so fine as to be invisible.[26] Another had such quickness of perception that he counted all the separate motions of an elastic body, while it was springing backward and forward at the rate of nine hundred millions of times in a second.'"[27]

"Absurd!" said the king.

"'Another of these magicians, by means of a fluid that nobody ever yet saw, could make the corpses of his friends brandish their arms, kick out their legs, fight, or even get up and dance at his will.[28] Another had cultivated his voice to so great an extent that he could have made himself heard from one end of the world to the other.[29] Another had so long an arm that he could sit down in Damascus and indite a letter at Bagdad—or indeed at any distance whatsoever.[30] Another commanded the lightning to come down to him out of the heavens, and it came at his call; and served him for a plaything when it came. Another took two loud sounds and out of them made a silence. Another constructed a deep darkness out of two brilliant lights.[31] Another made ice in a red-hot furnace.[32] Another directed the sun to paint his portrait, and the sun did.[33] Another took this luminary with the moon and the planets, and having first weighed them with scrupulous accuracy, probed into their depths and found out the solidity of the substance of which they were made. But the whole nation is, indeed, of so surprising a necromantic ability, that not even their infants, nor their commonest cats and dogs have any difficulty in seeing objects that do not exist at all, or that for twenty millions of years before the birth of the nation itself had been blotted out from the face of creation."'[34]

"Preposterous!" said the king.

"'The wives and daughters of these incomparably great and wise magi,'" continued Scheherazade, without being in any manner disturbed by these frequent and most ungentlemanly interruptions on the part of her husband—"'the wives and daughters of these eminent conjurers are every thing that is accomplished and refined; and would be every thing that is interesting and beautiful, but for an unhappy fatality that besets them, and from which not even the miraculous powers of their husbands and fathers has, hitherto, been adequate to save. Some fatalities come in certain shapes, and some in others—but this of which I speak has come in the shape of a crotchet.'"

"A what?" said the king.

"'A crotchet,'" said Scheherazade. "'One of the evil genii, who are perpetually upon the watch to inflict ill, has put it into the heads of these accomplished ladies that the thing which we describe as personal beauty consists altogether in the protuberance of the region which lies not very far below the small of the back. Perfection of loveliness, they say, is in the direct ratio of the extent of this lump. Having been long possessed of this idea, and bolsters being cheap in that country, the days have long gone by since it was possible to distinguish a woman from a dromedary—'"

"Stop!" said the king—"I can't stand that, and I won't. You have already given me a dreadful headache with your lies. The day, too, I perceive, is beginning to break. How long have we been married?—my conscience is getting to be troublesome again. And then that dromedary touch—do you take me for a fool? Upon the whole, you might as well get up and be throttled."

These words, as I learn from the "Isitsöornot," both grieved and astonished Scheherazade; but, as she knew the king to be a man of scrupulous integrity, and quite unlikely to forfeit his word, she submitted to her fate with a good grace. She derived, however, great consolation, (during the tightening of the bowstring,) from the reflection that much of the history remained still untold, and that the petulance of her brute of a husband had reaped for him a most righteous reward, in depriving him of many inconceivable adventures.

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1. The coralites.

2. "One of the most remarkable natural curiosities in Texas is a petrified forest, near the head of Pasigno river. It consists of several hundred trees, in an erect position, all turned to stone. Some trees, now growing, are partly petrified. This is a startling fact for natural philosophers, and must cause them to modify the existing theory of petrification."—Kennedy

This account, at first discredited, has since been corroborated by the discovery of a completely petrified forest, near the head waters of the Cheyenne, or Chienne river, which has its source in the Black Hills of the rocky chain.

There is scarcely, perhaps, a spectacle on the surface of the globe more remarkable, either in a geological or picturesque point of view than that presented by the petrified forest, near Cairo. The traveller, having passed the tombs of the caliphs, just beyond the gates of the city, proceeds to the southward, nearly at right angles to the road across the desert to Suez, and after having travelled some ten miles up a low barren valley, covered with sand, gravel, and sea shells, fresh as if the tide had retired but yesterday, crosses a low range of sandhills, which has for some distance run parallel to his path. The scene now presented to him is beyond conception singular and desolate. A mass of fragments of trees, all converted into stone, and when struck by his horse's hoof ringing like cast iron, is seen to extend itself for miles and miles around him, in the form of a decayed and prostrate forest. The wood is of a dark brown hue, but retains its form in perfection, the pieces being from one to fifteen feet in length, and from half a foot to three feet in thickness, strewed so closely together, as far as the eye can reach, that an Egyptian donkey can scarcely thread its way through amongst them, and so natural that, were it in Scotland or Ireland, it might pass without remark for some enormous drained bog, on which the exhumed trees lay rotting in the sun. The roots and rudiments of the branches are, in many cases, nearly perfect, and in some the worm-holes eaten under the bark are readily recognizable. The most delicate of the sap vessels, and all the finer portions of the centre of the wood, are perfectly entire, and bear to be examined with the strongest magnifiers. The whole are so thoroughly silicified as to scratch glass and are capable of receiving the highest polish.—*Asiatic Magazine*

3. The Mammoth Cave of Kentucky.

4. In Iceland, 1783.

5. "During the eruption of Hecla, in 1766, clouds of this kind produced such a degree of darkness that, at Glaumba, which is more than fifty leagues from the mountain, people could only find their way by groping. During the eruption of Vesuvius, in 1794, at Caserta, four leagues distant, people could only walk by the light of torches. On the first of May, 1812, a cloud of volcanic ashes and sand, coming from a volcano in the island of St. Vincent, covered the whole of Barbadoes, spreading over it so intense a darkness that, at mid-day, in the open air, one could not perceive the trees or other objects near him, or even a white handkerchief placed at the distance of six inches from the eye."—Murray, p.215, *Phil. edit.*

6. "In the year 1790, in the Caraccas during an earthquake, a portion of the granite soil sank and left a lake eight hundred yards in diameter, and from eighty to a hundred feet deep. It was a part of the forest of Aripao which sank, and the trees remained green for several months under the water."—Murray, p.221.

7. The hardest steel ever manufactured may, under the action of a blowpipe, be reduced to an impalpable powder, which will float readily in the atmospheric air.

8. The region of the Niger. See Simmona's "*Colonial Magazine*."

9. The region of the Niger. See Simmona's "*Colonial Magazine*."

10. The Myrmeleon—lion-ant. The term “monster” is equally applicable to small abnormal things and to great, while such epithets as “vast” are merely comparative. The cavern of the myrmeleon is vast in comparison with the hole of the common red ant. A grain of silex is also a “rock.”

11. The Epidendrum flos-aeris, of the family of the Orchideae, grows with merely the surface of its roots attached to a tree or other object, from which it derives no nutriment—subsisting altogether upon air.

12. The Parasites, such as the wonderful Rafflesia arnoldii.

13. Schouw advocates a class of plants that grow upon living animals—the Plantae Epizoae. Of this class are the Fuci and Algae. Mr. J. B. Williams, of Salem, Mass., presented the “National Institute” with an insect from New Zealand, with the following description:—“‘The Hotte,’ a decided caterpillar, or worm, is found growing at the foot of the Rata tree, with a plant growing out of its head. This most peculiar and most extraordinary insect travels up both the Rata and Perriri trees, and entering into the top, eats its way, perforating the trunk of the tree until it reaches the root, it then comes out of the root, and dies, or remains dormant, and the plant propagates out of its head; the body remains perfect and entire, of a harder substance than when alive. From this insect the natives [are] making a coloring for tattooing.”

14. In mines and natural caves we find a species of cryptogamous fungus that emits an intense phosphorescence.

15. The orchis, scabius and valisneria.

16. “The corolla of this flower (Aristolochia clematitis), which is tubular, but terminating upwards in a ligulate limb, is inflated into a globular figure at the base. The tubular part is internally beset with stiff hairs, pointing downwards. The globular part contains the pistil, which consists merely of a germen and stigma, together with the surrounding stamens. But the stamens, being shorter than the germen, cannot discharge the pollen so as to throw it upon the stigma, as the flower stands always upright till after impregnation. And hence, without some additional and peculiar aid, the pollen must necessarily fan down to the bottom of the flower. Now, the aid that nature has furnished in this case, is that of the Tiputa Pennicornis, a small insect, which entering the tube of the corolla in quest of honey, descends to the bottom, and rummages about till it becomes quite covered with pollen; but not being able to force its way out again, owing to the downward position of the hairs, which converge to a point like the wires of a mouse-trap, and being somewhat impatient of its confinement it brushes backwards and forwards, trying every corner, till, after repeatedly traversing the stigma, it covers it with pollen sufficient for its impregnation, in consequence of which the flower soon begins to droop, and the hairs to shrink to the sides of the tube, effecting an easy passage for the escape of the insect.”—Rev. P. Keith, *System of Physiological Botany*.

17. The bees—ever since bees were—have been constructing their cells with just such sides, in just such number, and at just such inclinations, as it has been demonstrated (in a problem involving the profoundest mathematical principles) are the very sides, in the very number, and at the very angles, which will afford the creatures the most room that is compatible with the greatest stability of structure.

18. He observed a flock of pigeons passing betwixt Frankfort and the Indian territory, one mile at least in breadth; it took up four hours in passing, which, at the rate of one mile per minute, gives a length of 240 miles; and, supposing three pigeons to each square yard, gives 2,230,272,000 Pigeons.—“Travels in Canada and the United States,” by Lieut. F. Hall.

19. “The earth is upheld by a cow of a blue color, having horns four hundred in number.”—George Sale, *The Koran*.

20. “The Entozoa, or intestinal worms, have repeatedly been observed in the muscles, and in the cerebral substance of men.”—See Wyatt’s *Physiology*, p. 143.

21. On the Great Western Railway, between London and Exeter, a speed of 71 miles per hour has been attained. A train weighing 90 tons was whirled from Paddington to Didcot (53 miles) in 51 minutes.

22. The *Eccalobeion*.

23. Maelzel’s Automaton Chess-player.

24. Babbage’s Calculating Machine.

25. Chabert, and since him, a hundred others.

26. The Electrotype.

27. Wollaston made of platinum for the field of views in a telescope a wire one eighteen-thousandth part of an inch in thickness. It could be seen only by means of the microscope.

28. Newton demonstrated that the retina beneath the influence of the violet ray of the spectrum vibrated 900,000,000 times in a second.

29. The Voltaic pile.

30. The Electro Telegraph Printing Apparatus.

31. The Electro Telegraph transmits intelligence instantaneously—at least at so far as regards any distance upon the earth.

32. Common experiments in Natural Philosophy. If two red rays from two luminous points be admitted into a dark chamber so as to fall on a white surface, and differ in their length by 0.0000258 of an inch, their intensity is doubled. So also if the difference in length be any whole-number multiple of that fraction. A multiple by 2¼, 3¼, &c., gives an intensity equal to one ray only; but a multiple by 2½, 3½, &c., gives the result of total darkness. In violet rays similar effects arise when the difference in length is 0.000157 of an inch; and with all other rays the results are the same—the difference varying with a uniform increase from the violet to the red. Analogous experiments in respect to sound produce analogous results.

33. Place a platina crucible over a spirit lamp, and keep it a red heat; pour in some sulphuric acid, which, though the most volatile of bodies at a common temperature, will be found to become completely fixed in a hot crucible, and not a drop evaporates—being surrounded by an

atmosphere of its own, it does not, in fact, touch the sides. A few drops of water are now introduced, when the acid, immediately coming in contact with the heated sides of the crucible, flies off in sulphurous acid vapor, and so rapid is its progress, that the caloric of the water passes off with it, which falls a lump of ice to the bottom; by taking advantage of the moment before it is allowed to remelt, it may be turned out a lump of ice from a red-hot vessel.

34. The Daguerreotype.

35. Although light travels 167,000 miles in a second, the distance of 61 Cygni (the only star whose distance is ascertained) is so inconceivably great, that its rays would require more than ten years to reach the earth. For stars beyond this, 20—or even 1000 years—would be a moderate estimate. Thus, if they had been annihilated 20, or 1000 years ago, we might still see them to-day by the light which started from their surfaces 20 or 1000 years in the past time. That many which we see daily are really extinct, is not impossible—not even improbable.

H. P. LOVECRAFT, “THE NAMELESS CITY”

H. P. Lovecraft’s short story “The Nameless City” (first published in 1921) draws from the settings and mythology of ancient Egypt in developing the theme of existential dread, but also references the lost cities of antiquity featured in the Qur’an and the One Thousand and One Nights. *The* Nights *features many stories of travelers who encounter mysterious cities that are strangely devoid of living occupants and inspire both dread and awe. The closest analogues to Lovecraft’s story in the* Nights *are “The City of Many-Columned Iram” and “The City of Brass”—although the plot motif of a lost city is also found in the story of the owner in “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.”*

In the story of Iram in the One Thousand and One Nights, *a long-lived king, fond of reading descriptions of paradise in ancient books, attempts to build a terrestrial version over five hundred years by enlisting the aid of architects, artists, and engineers. But as the king travels to inspect his finished paradise, God sends down “a mighty rushing sound from the Heavens” to destroy the king and his followers with “its vehement clamor” (Burton, vol. 4, p. 117). In “The City of Brass,” a caliph sponsors an expedition to find a jinni imprisoned by Solomon in a jar, and after a long journey the men enter a deserted castle whose inscriptions speak of the ephemeral quality of existence. As they journey farther through the desert,* *they encounter a jinni imprisoned in a pillar who explains the way to a land that has escaped the Flood. As the men continue their journey, they find the eerie City of Brass, which, despite its enormous wealth, has been brought to a standstill by a terrible famine. In crafting his own antediluvian land, Lovecraft may well have been guided by the* Arabian Nights *commentary of explorer Richard Burton, who wrote that "the very depths of melancholy, of majestic pathos and of true sublimity are reached in Many-Columned Iram and the City of Brass, … a luxury of woe … one long wail of despair which echoes long and loud in the hearer's heart" (Burton, vol. 10, p. 159).*

The ancient creatures on the murals in Lovecraft's "nameless city" are reminiscent of the jinn who play such an important role in the stories of the Nights. *Like the reptilian figures in Lovecraft's tale, the jinn preceded man. As Edward Lane explained in his nineteenth-century account of Egypt, "It is commonly believed that the earth was inhabited, before the time of Adam, by a race of beings different from ourselves in form, and much more powerful" (* Modern Egyptians, *p. 204). Attempting to explain the jinn to his English readers, Lane suggested that "the form of the monster is at first undefined," but it then resolves into a shape that might be human, animalistic, or reptilian. Jinn, he claimed, were believed to inhabit ancient tombs and temples, and sometimes even to have built "all the most stupendous remains of antiquity in Egypt," as it was "impossible that they could have been raised by human hands" (p. 207). Jinn in the* Arabian Nights, *and Islamic mythology, are shapeshifters. Their ability to assume the shape of "men, brutes, and monsters" (in Lane's terminology) resembles the "monstrosities" of Lovecraft's nameless city, which may resemble several known animals but remain "outside all established categories" (p. 202).*

WHEN I DREW nigh the nameless city I knew it was accursed. I was travelling in a parched and terrible valley under the moon, and afar I saw it protruding uncannily above the sands as parts of a corpse may protrude from an ill-made grave. Fear spoke from the age-worn stones of this hoary survivor of the deluge, this great-grandmother of the eldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had ever dared to see.

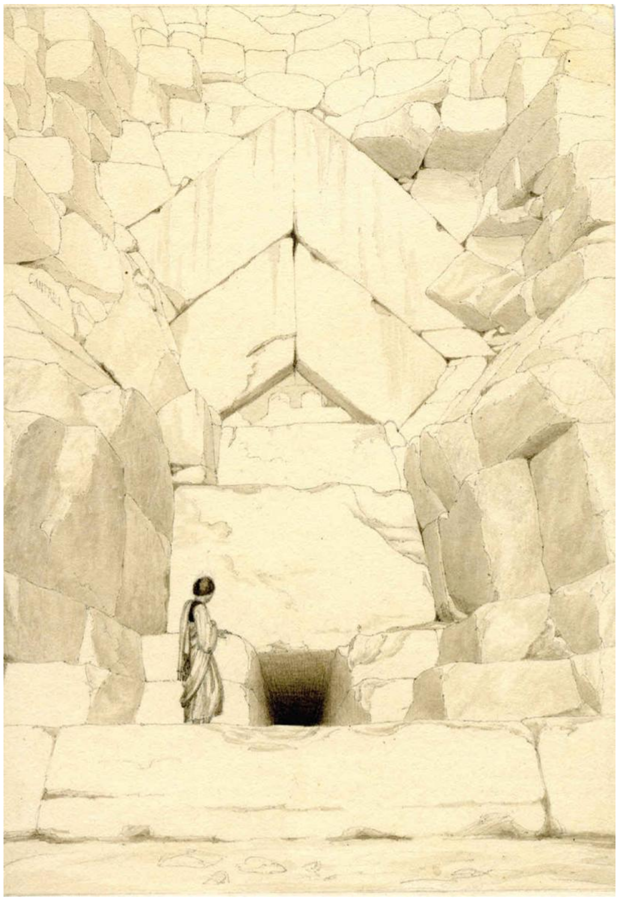
Remote in the desert of Araby lies the nameless city,[1] crumbling and inarticulate, its low walls nearly hidden by the sands of uncounted ages. It must have been thus before the first stones of Memphis were laid, and while the bricks of Babylon were yet unbaked. There is no legend so old as to give it a name, or to recall that it was ever alive; but it is told of in whispers around campfires and muttered about by grandams in the tents of sheiks, so that all the tribes shun it without wholly knowing why. It was of this place that Abdul Alhazred the mad poet dreamed on the night before he sang his unexplainable couplet:

“That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die.”

I should have known that the Arabs had good reason for shunning the nameless city, the city told of in strange tales but seen by no living man, yet I defied them and went into the untrodden waste with my camel. I alone have seen it, and that is why no other face bears such hideous lines of fear as mine; why no other man shivers so horribly when the night-wind rattles the windows. When I came upon it in the ghastly stillness of unending sleep it looked at me, chilly from the rays of a cold moon amidst the desert’s heat. And as I returned its look I forgot my triumph at finding it, and stopped still with my camel to wait for the dawn.

For hours I waited, till the east grew grey and the stars faded, and the grey turned to roseal light edged with gold. I heard a moaning and saw a storm of sand stirring[2] among the antique stones though the sky was clear and the vast reaches of the desert still. Then suddenly above the desert’s far rim came the blazing edge of the sun, seen through the tiny sandstorm which was passing away, and in my fevered state I fancied that from some remote depth there came a crash of musical metal to hail the fiery disc as Memnon hails it from the banks of the Nile. My ears rang and my imagination seethed as I led my camel slowly across the sand to that unvocal stone place; that place too old for Egypt and Meroë to remember; that place which I alone of living men had seen.

In and out amongst the shapeless foundations of houses and palaces I wandered, finding never a carving or inscription to tell of those men, if men they were, who built the city and dwelt therein so long ago. The antiquity of the spot was unwholesome, and I longed to encounter some sign or device to prove that the city was indeed fashioned by mankind. There were certain *proportions* and *dimensions* in the ruins which I did not like. I had with me many tools, and dug much within the walls of the obliterated edifices; but progress was slow, and nothing significant was revealed. When night and the moon returned I felt a chill wind which brought new fear, so that I did not dare to remain in the city. And as I went outside the antique walls to sleep, a small sighing sandstorm gathered behind me, blowing over the grey stones though the moon was bright and most of the desert still.



Watercolor sketch of Egyptian monuments by Edward W. Lane. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

I awaked just at dawn from a pageant of horrible dreams, my ears ringing as from some metallic peal. I saw the sun peering redly through the last gusts of a little sandstorm that hovered over the nameless city, and marked the quietness of the rest of the landscape. Once more I ventured within those brooding ruins that swelled beneath the sand like an ogre under a coverlet, and again dug vainly for relics of the forgotten race. At noon I rested, and in the afternoon I spent much time tracing the walls, and the bygone streets, and the outlines of the nearly vanished buildings. I saw that the city had been mighty indeed, and wondered at the sources of its greatness. To myself I pictured all the splendours of an age so distant that Chaldaea could not recall it, and thought of Sarnath the Doomed, that stood in the land of Mnar when mankind was young, and of Ib, that was carven of grey stone before mankind existed.

All at once I came upon a place where the bedrock rose stark through the sand and formed a low cliff; and here I saw with joy what seemed to promise further traces of the antediluvian people. Hewn rudely on the face of the cliff were the unmistakable facades of several small, squat rock houses or temples; whose interiors might preserve many secrets of ages too remote for calculation, though sandstorms had long since effaced any carvings which may have been outside.

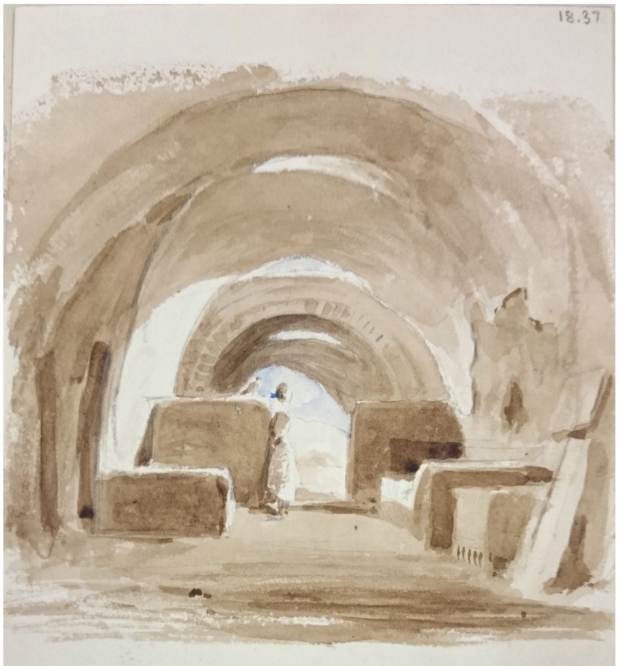
Very low and sand-choked were all of the dark apertures near me, but I cleared one with my spade and crawled through it, carrying a torch to reveal whatever mysteries it might hold. When I was inside I saw that the cavern was indeed a temple, and beheld plain signs of the race that had lived and worshipped before the desert was a desert. Primitive altars, pillars, and niches, all curiously low, were not absent; and though I saw no sculptures nor frescoes, there were many singular stones clearly shaped into symbols by artificial means. The lowness of the chiselled chamber was very strange, for I could hardly more than kneel upright; but the area was so great that my torch shewed only part at a time. I shuddered oddly in some of the far corners; for certain altars and stones suggested forgotten rites of terrible, revolting, and inexplicable nature, and made me wonder what manner of men could have made and frequented such a temple. When

I had seen all that the place contained, I crawled out again, avid to find what the other temples might yield.

Night had now approached, yet the tangible things I had seen made curiosity stronger than fear, so that I did not flee from the long moon-cast shadows that had daunted me when first I saw the nameless city. In the twilight I cleared another aperture and with a new torch crawled into it, finding more vague stones and symbols, though nothing more definite than the other temple had contained. The room was just as low, but much less broad, ending in a very narrow passage crowded with obscure and cryptical shrines. About these shrines I was prying when the noise of a wind and of my camel outside broke through the stillness and drew me forth to see what could have frightened the beast.

The moon was gleaming vividly over the primeval ruins, lighting a dense cloud of sand that seemed blown by a strong but decreasing wind from some point along the cliff ahead of me. I knew it was this chilly, sandy wind which had disturbed the camel, and was about to lead him to a place of better shelter when I chanced to glance up and saw that there was no wind atop the cliff. This astonished me and made me fearful again, but I immediately recalled the sudden local winds I had seen and heard before at sunrise and sunset, and judged it was a normal thing. I decided that it came from some rock fissure leading to a cave, and watched the troubled sand to trace it to its source; soon perceiving that it came from the black orifice of a temple a long distance south of me, almost out of sight. Against the choking sand-cloud I plodded toward this temple, which as I neared it loomed larger than the rest, and shewed a doorway far less clogged with caked sand. I would have entered had not the terrific force of the icy wind almost quenched my torch. It poured madly out of the dark door, sighing uncannily as it ruffled the sand and spread about the weird ruins.[3] Soon it grew fainter and the sand grew more and more still, till finally all was at rest again; but a presence seemed stalking among the spectral stones of the city, and when I glanced at the moon it seemed to quiver as though mirrored in unquiet waters. I was more afraid than I could explain, but not enough to dull my thirst for wonder; so as soon as the wind was quite gone I crossed into the dark chamber from which it had come.

This temple, as I had fancied from the outside, was larger than either of those I had visited before; and was presumably a natural cavern, since it bore winds from some region beyond. Here I could stand quite upright, but saw that the stones and altars were as low as those in the other temples. On the walls and roof I beheld for the first time some traces of the pictorial art of the ancient race, curious curling streaks of paint that had almost faded or crumbled away; and on two of the altars I saw with rising excitement a maze of well-fashioned curvilinear carvings. As I held my torch aloft it seemed to me that the shape of the roof was too regular to be natural, and I wondered what the prehistoric cutters of stone had first worked upon. Their engineering skill must have been vast.



Egyptian sketch by Joseph Bonomi. © Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

Then a brighter flare of the fantastic flame shewed me that for which I had been seeking, the opening to those remoter abysses whence the sudden wind had blown; and I grew faint when I saw that it was a small and plainly *artificial* door chiselled in the solid rock. I thrust my torch within, beholding a black tunnel with the roof arching low over a rough flight of very small, numerous, and steeply descending steps. I shall always see those steps in my dreams, for I came to learn what they meant. At the time I hardly knew whether to call them steps or mere foot-holds in a precipitous descent. My mind was whirling with mad thoughts, and the words and warnings of Arab prophets seemed to float across the desert from the lands that men know to the nameless city that men dare not know. Yet I hesitated only a moment before advancing through the portal and commencing to climb cautiously down the steep passage, feet first, as though on a ladder.

It is only in the terrible phantasms of drugs or delirium that any other man can have had such a descent as mine. The narrow passage led infinitely down like some hideous haunted well, and the torch I held above my head could not light the unknown depths toward which I was crawling. I lost track of the hours and forgot to consult my watch, though I was frightened when I thought of the distance I must be traversing. There were changes of direction and of steepness, and once I came to a long, low, level passage where I had to wriggle feet first along the rocky floor, holding my torch at arm’s length beyond my head. The place was not high enough for kneeling. After that were more of the steep steps, and I was still scrambling down interminably when my failing torch died out. I do not think I noticed it at the time, for when I did notice it I was still holding it high above me as if it were ablaze. I was quite unbalanced with that instinct for the strange and the unknown which has made me a wanderer upon earth and a haunter of far, ancient, and forbidden places.

In the darkness there flashed before my mind fragments of my cherished treasury of daemoniac lore; sentences from Alhazred the mad Arab, paragraphs from the apocryphal nightmares of Damascius, and infamous lines from the delirious *Image du Monde* of Gauthier de Metz. I repeated queer extracts, and muttered of Afrasiab and the daemons that floated with him down the Oxus; later chanting over and over again a phrase from one of Lord Dunsany’s tales—“the unreverberate blackness of the abyss.” Once when the descent grew amazingly steep I recited something in sing-song from Thomas Moore until I feared to recite more:

“A reservoir of darkness, black
As witches’ cauldrons are, when fill’d
With moon-drugs in th’ eclipse distill’d.
Leaning to look if foot might pass

Down thro' that chasm, I saw, beneath,
As far as vision could explore,
The jetty sides as smooth as glass,
Looking as if just varnish'd o'er
With that dark pitch the Sea of Death
Throws out upon its slimy shore."

Time had quite ceased to exist when my feet again felt a level floor, and I found myself in a place slightly higher than the rooms in the two smaller temples now so incalculably far above my head. I could not quite stand, but could kneel upright, and in the dark I shuffled and crept hither and thither at random. I soon knew that I was in a narrow passage whose walls were lined with cases of wood having glass fronts. As in that Palaeozoic and abysmal place I felt of such things as polished wood and glass I shuddered at the possible implications. The cases were apparently ranged along each side of the passage at regular intervals, and were oblong and horizontal, hideously like coffins in shape and size. When I tried to move two or three for further examination, I found they were firmly fastened.

I saw that the passage was a long one, so floundered ahead rapidly in a creeping run that would have seemed horrible had any eye watched me in the blackness; crossing from side to side occasionally to feel of my surroundings and be sure the walls and rows of cases still stretched on. Man is so used to thinking visually that I almost forgot the darkness and pictured the endless corridor of wood and glass in its low-studded monotony as though I saw it. And then in a moment of indescribable emotion I did see it.

Just when my fancy merged into real sight I cannot tell; but there came a gradual glow ahead, and all at once I knew that I saw the dim outlines of the corridor and the cases, revealed by some unknown subterranean phosphorescence. For a little while all was exactly as I had imagined it, since the glow was very faint; but as I mechanically kept on stumbling ahead into the stronger light I realised that my fancy had been but feeble. This hall was no relic of crudity like the temples in the city above, but a monument of the most magnificent and exotic art. Rich, vivid, and daringly fantastic designs and pictures formed a continuous scheme of mural painting whose lines and colours were beyond description. The cases were of a strange golden wood, with fronts of exquisite glass, and contained the mummified forms of creatures outreaching in grotesqueness the most chaotic dreams of man.

To convey any idea of these monstrosities is impossible. They were of the reptile kind,[4] with body lines suggesting sometimes the crocodile, sometimes the seal, but more often nothing of which either the naturalist or the palaeontologist ever heard. In size they approximated a small man, and their fore legs bore delicate and evidently flexible feet curiously like human hands and fingers. But strangest of all were their heads, which presented a contour violating all known biological principles. To nothing can such things be well compared—in one flash I thought of comparisons as varied as the cat, the bulldog, the mythic Satyr, and the human being. Not Jove himself had so colossal and protuberant a forehead, yet the horns and the noselessness and the alligator-like jaw placed the things outside all established categories.[5] I debated for a time on the reality of the mummies, half suspecting they were artificial idols; but soon decided they were indeed some palaeogean species which had lived when the nameless city was alive. To crown their grotesqueness, most of them were gorgeously enrobed in the costliest of fabrics, and lavishly laden with ornaments of gold, jewels, and unknown shining metals.

The importance of these crawling creatures must have been vast, for they held first place among the wild designs on the frescoed walls and ceiling. With matchless skill had the artist drawn them in a world of their own, wherein they had cities and gardens fashioned to suit their dimensions; and I could not but think that their pictured history was allegorical, perhaps shewing the progress of the race that worshipped them. These creatures, I said to myself, were to the men of the nameless city what the she-wolf was to Rome, or some totem-beast is to a tribe of Indians.

Holding this view, I thought I could trace roughly a wonderful epic of the nameless city; the tale of a mighty sea-coast metropolis that ruled the world before Africa rose out of the waves, and of its struggles as the sea shrank away, and the desert crept into the fertile valley that held it.[6] I saw its wars and triumphs, its troubles and defeats, and afterward its terrible fight against the desert when thousands of its people—here represented in allegory by the grotesque reptiles—were driven to chisel their way down through the rocks in some marvellous manner to another world whereof their prophets had told them. It was all vividly weird and realistic, and its connexion with the awesome descent I had made was unmistakable. I even recognised the passages.

As I crept along the corridor toward the brighter light I saw later stages of the painted epic—the leave-taking of the race that had dwelt in the nameless city and the valley around for ten million years; the race whose souls shrank from quitting scenes their bodies had known so long, where they had settled as nomads in the earth's youth, hewing in the virgin rock those primal shrines at which they never ceased to worship. Now that the light was better I studied the pictures more closely, and, remembering that the strange reptiles must represent the unknown men, pondered upon the customs of the nameless city. Many things were peculiar and inexplicable. The civilisation, which included a written alphabet, had seemingly risen to a higher order than those immeasurably later civilisations of Egypt and Chaldaea, yet there were curious omissions. I could, for example, find no pictures to represent deaths or funeral customs, save such as were related to wars, violence, and plagues; and I wondered at the reticence shewn concerning natural death. It was as though an ideal of earthly immortality had been fostered as a cheering illusion.

Still nearer the end of the passage were painted scenes of the utmost picturesqueness and extravagance; contrasted views of the nameless city in its desertion and growing ruin, and of the strange new realm or paradise to which the race had hewed its way through the stone. In these views the city and the desert valley were shewn always by moonlight, a golden nimbus hovering over the fallen walls and half revealing the splendid perfection of former times, shewn spectrally and elusively by the artist. The paradisal scenes were almost too extravagant to be believed; portraying a hidden world of eternal day filled with glorious cities and ethereal hills and valleys. At the very last I thought I saw signs of an artistic anti-climax. The paintings were less skilful, and much more bizarre than even the wildest of the earlier scenes. They seemed to record a slow decadence of the ancient stock, coupled with a growing ferocity toward the outside world from which it was driven by the desert. The forms of the people—always represented by the sacred reptiles—appeared to be gradually wasting away, though their spirit as shewn hovering about the ruins by moonlight gained in proportion. Emaciated priests, displayed as reptiles in ornate robes, cursed the upper air and all who breathed it; and one terrible final scene shewed a primitive-looking man, perhaps a pioneer of ancient Irem, the City of Pillars,[7] torn to pieces by members of the elder race. I remembered how the Arabs fear the nameless city, and was glad that beyond this place the grey walls and ceiling were bare.

As I viewed the pageant of mural history I had approached very closely the end of the low-ceiled hall, and was aware of a great gate through which came all of the illuminating phosphorescence. Creeping up to it, I cried aloud in transcendent amazement at what lay beyond; for instead of other and brighter chambers there was only an illimitable void of uniform radiance, such as one might fancy when gazing down from the peak of Mount Everest upon a sea of sunlit mist. Behind me was a passage so cramped that I could not stand upright in it; before me was an infinity of subterranean effulgence.

Reaching down from the passage into the abyss was the head of a steep flight of steps—small numerous steps like those of the black passages I had traversed—but after a few feet the glowing vapours concealed everything. Swung back open against the left-hand wall of the passage was a massive door of brass, incredibly thick and decorated with fantastic bas-reliefs, which could if closed shut the whole inner world of light away from the vaults and passages of rock. I looked at the steps, and for the nonce dared not try them. I touched the open brass door, and could not move it. Then I sank prone to the stone floor, my mind aflame with prodigious reflections which not even a death-like exhaustion could banish.

As I lay still with closed eyes, free to ponder, many things I had lightly noted in the frescoes came back to me with new and terrible significance—scenes representing the nameless city in its heyday, the vegetation of the valley around it, and the distant lands with which its merchants traded.

The allegory of the crawling creatures puzzled me by its universal prominence, and I wondered that it should be so closely followed in a pictured history of such importance. In the frescoes the nameless city had been shewn in proportions fitted to the reptiles. I wondered what its real proportions and magnificence had been, and reflected a moment on certain oddities I had noticed in the ruins. I thought curiously of the lowness of the primal temples and of the underground corridor, which were doubtless hewn thus out of deference to the reptile deities there honoured; though it perforce reduced the worshippers to crawling. Perhaps the very rites had involved a crawling in imitation of the creatures. No religious theory, however, could easily explain why the level passage in that awesome descent should be as low as the temples—or lower, since one could not even kneel in it. As I thought of the crawling creatures, whose hideous mummified forms were so close to me, I felt a new throb of fear. Mental associations are curious, and I shrank from the idea that except for the poor primitive man torn to pieces in the last painting, mine was the only human form amidst the many relics and symbols of primordial life.

But as always in my strange and roving existence, wonder soon drove out fear; for the luminous abyss and what it might contain presented a problem worthy of the greatest explorer. That a weird world of mystery lay far down that flight of peculiarly small steps I could not doubt, and I hoped to find there those human memorials which the painted corridor had failed to give. The frescoes had pictured unbelievable cities, hills, and valleys in this lower realm, and my fancy dwelt on the rich and colossal ruins that awaited me.

My fears, indeed, concerned the past rather than the future. Not even the physical horror of my position in that cramped corridor of dead reptiles and antediluvian frescoes, miles below the world I knew and faced by another world of eerie light and mist, could match the lethal dread I felt at the abysmal antiquity of the scene and its soul. An ancientness so vast that measurement is feeble seemed to leer down from the primal stones and rock-hewn temples in the nameless city, while the very latest of the astounding maps in the frescoes shewed oceans and continents that man has forgotten, with only here and there some vaguely familiar outline. Of what could have happened in the geological aeons since the paintings ceased and the death-hating race resentfully succumbed to decay, no man might say. Life had once teemed in these caverns and in the luminous realm beyond; now I was alone with vivid relics, and I trembled to think of the countless ages through which these relics had kept a silent and deserted vigil.

Suddenly there came another burst of that acute fear which had intermittently seized me ever since I first saw the terrible valley and the nameless city under a cold moon, and despite my exhaustion I found myself starting frantically to a sitting posture and gazing back along the black corridor toward the tunnels that rose to the outer world. My sensations were much like those which had made me shun the nameless city at night, and were as inexplicable as they were poignant. In another moment, however, I received a still greater shock in the form of a definite sound—the first which had broken the utter silence of these tomb-like depths. It was a deep, low moaning, as of a distant throng of condemned spirits, and came from the direction in which I was staring. Its volume rapidly grew, till soon it reverberated frightfully through the low passage, and at the same time I became conscious of an increasing draught of cold air, likewise flowing from the tunnels and the city above. The touch of this air seemed to restore my balance, for I instantly recalled the sudden gusts which had risen around the mouth of the abyss each sunset and sunrise, one of which had indeed served to reveal the hidden tunnels to me. I looked at my watch and saw that sunrise was near, so braced myself to resist the gale which was sweeping down to its cavern home as it had swept forth at evening. My fear again waned low, since a natural phenomenon tends to dispel broodings over the unknown.

More and more madly poured the shrieking, moaning night-wind into that gulf of the inner earth. I dropped prone again and clutched vainly at the floor for fear of being swept bodily through the open gate into the phosphorescent abyss. Such fury I had not expected, and as I grew aware of an actual slipping of my form toward the abyss I was beset by a thousand new terrors of apprehension and imagination. The malignancy of the blast awakened incredible fancies; once more I compared myself shudderingly to the only other human image in that frightful corridor, the man who was torn to pieces by the nameless race, for in the fiendish clawing of the swirling currents there seemed to abide a vindictive rage all the stronger because it was largely impotent. I think I screamed frantically near the last—I was almost mad—but if I did so my cries were lost in the hell-born babel of the howling wind-wraiths. I tried to crawl against the murderous invisible torrent, but I could not even hold my own as I was pushed slowly and inexorably toward the unknown world. Finally reason must have wholly snapped, for I fell to babbling over and over that unexplainable couplet of the mad Arab Alhazred, who dreamed of the nameless city:

"That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die."

Only the grim brooding desert gods know what really took place—what indescribable struggles and scrambles in the dark I endured or what Abaddon guided me back to life, where I must always remember and shiver in the night-wind till oblivion—or worse—claims me. Monstrous, unnatural, colossal, was the thing—too far beyond all the ideas of man to be believed except in the silent damnable small hours when one cannot sleep.

I have said that the fury of the rushing blast was infernal—cacodaemoniacal—and that its voices were hideous with the pent-up viciousness of desolate eternities. Presently those voices, while still chaotic before me, seemed to my beating brain to take articulate form behind me; and down there in the grave of unnumbered aeon-dead antiquities, leagues below the dawn-lit world of men, I heard the ghastly cursing and snarling of strange-tongued fiends. Turning, I saw outlined against the luminous aether of the abyss what could not be seen against the dusk of the corridor—a nightmare horde of rushing devils; hate-distorted, grotesquely panoplied, half-transparent; devils of a race no man might mistake—the crawling reptiles of the nameless city.

And as the wind died away I was plunged into the ghoul-peopled blackness of earth's bowels;[8] for behind the last of the creatures the great brazen door clanged shut with a deafening peal of metallic music whose reverberations swelled out to the distant world to hail the rising sun as Memnon hails it from the banks of the Nile.

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1. *lies the nameless city:* The *Arabian Nights* includes numerous examples of such nameless cities lying in remote locations. In his notes to “The Story of the City of Brass,” Richard Burton imagines a “true” City of Brass located in the Maghreb, “the region of magic and mystery,” the city’s legend suggested by “ruins which rise abruptly from what has become a sandy waste” (vol. 6, p. 83n).

2. *saw a storm of sand stirring:* The appearance of jinn is often described in this way in the *Nights*. In the notes to his translation, Edward Lane reports that a whirlwind of sand sweeping across the desert “is believed to be caused by the flight of an evil Jinnee” (vol. 1, p. 30, n. 21). The presence of supernatural beings might be divined from such a detail.

3. *spread about the weird ruins:* This desert tableau of “weird ruins” in a moonlight of icy winds is reminiscent of an autobiographical note Burton adds to his version of “The City of Brass” concerning his explorations of towns deserted since the sixth century: “I have never seen anything weirder than a moonlight night in one of these strong places whose masonry is perfect as when first built, the snowy light pouring on the jet-black basalt and the breeze sighing and the jackal wailing in the desert around” (vol. 6. p. 102n).

4. *the reptile kind:* The association that Edward Lane makes between the ancient race of jinn and the reptilian forms that are featured in this story is encapsulated in his account of Egyptian beliefs about the consequences of evil jinn or ghouls eavesdropping on the conversations of angels in the lowest level of heaven. When they “hear words by stealth, they are struck by shooting stars; and some are burnt; some, falling into a sea, or rather a large river (bahr), become converted into crocodiles” (vol. 1, p. 32, n. 21).

5. *outside all established categories:* Lovecraft’s narrator struggles to understand the contradictory traces of human and animal traits apparent in these mummified forms in a way that replicates the confusion produced by a jinni’s shape shifting qualities. The “Story of The City of Brass” notably includes a jinni who possesses both human and animal qualities. When the expedition finds him, he has been confined to a pillar through the power of Solomon and has human arms, wings, the paws of a lion, and a third eye.

6. *the desert crept into the fertile valley that held it:* The narrator’s explanation for the demise of the mighty city, whose fertile territory is slowly swallowed up by the desert, is reminiscent of the demise of the City of Brass, whose precious jewels and costly fabrics are no defense against the destructive force of famine.

7. *ancient Irem, the City of Pillars:* Lovecraft references the *Nights* tale of “The City of Many-Columned Iram” and provides an alternative explanation for its destruction. In the *One Thousand and One Nights*, the building of the extraordinary city of Iram appears to symbolize the vain effort to achieve paradise on earth and is destroyed in an act of divine punishment. The narrator in Lovecraft’s story, in contrast, seems to suggest that the primordial race of the “nameless city” attacked the ambitious ruler of Iram. The beautiful city’s destruction is the result of the vengeful wrath of beings who have experienced the loss of their own paradise—an act of demons rather than God.

8. *the ghoul-peopled blackness of earth's bowels:* The final images of Lovecraft's tale present the mysterious creatures of the underground realm as grotesque, half-transparent devils and flesh-eating ghouls—clearly connecting them to the imagery of evil jinn that can be found in the influential English translations of the *Arabian Nights* in the author's time.

O. HENRY, “A MADISON SQUARE ARABIAN NIGHT”

Purol-Pep
GASOLINE
NEW YORK CORDAGE & CABLE CO.

Waterfront, South Street, Manhattan. *Photo by Berenice Abbott (1935). The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.*

The American short story writer William Sydney Porter, known by the pen name O. Henry, published “A Madison Square Arabian Night” in the collection The Trimmed Lamp *in 1907. The story’s protagonist, Carson Chalmers, recalls King Shahriyar and his preoccupation with his wife’s* *betrayal. But within this frame, O. Henry also plays upon the cycle of tales of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, who often seeks distraction and new companions who can regale him with strange and astonishing tales. The tale flirts with becoming a version of “The Sleeper and the Waker,” in which the caliph sets up a commoner as caliph in a prank. Chalmers’s homeless guest jokes that he had as little chance of receiving hospitality that night as he had of becoming president. Yet, having had fun with the conventions of these al-Rashid tales, this story, like the frame tale of Shahriyar and Shahrazad, returns to the mystery of marital fidelity.*

TO CARSON CHALMERS, in his apartment near the square, Phillips brought the evening mail. Beside the routine correspondence there were two items bearing the same foreign postmark.

One of the incoming parcels contained a photograph of a woman. The other contained an interminable letter, over which Chalmers hung, absorbed, for a long time. The letter was from another woman; and it contained poisoned barbs, sweetly dipped in honey, and feathered with innuendoes concerning the photographed woman.

Chalmers tore this letter into a thousand bits and began to wear out his expensive rug by striding back and forth upon it. Thus an animal from the jungle acts when it is caged, and thus a caged man acts when he is housed in a jungle of doubt.

By and by the restless mood was overcome. The rug was not an enchanted one. For sixteen feet he could travel along it; three thousand miles was beyond its power to aid.

Phillips appeared. He never entered; he invariably appeared, like a well-oiled genie.[1]

“Will you dine here, sir, or out?” he asked.

“Here,” said Chalmers, “and in half an hour.” He listened glumly to the January blasts making an Aeolian trombone of the empty street.

“Wait,” he said to the disappearing genie. “As I came home across the end of the square I saw many men standing there in rows. There was one mounted upon something, talking. Why do those men stand in rows, and why are they there?”

“They are homeless men, sir,” said Phillips. “The man standing on the box tries to get lodging for them for the night. People come around to listen and give him money. Then he sends as many as the money will pay for to some lodging-house. That is why they stand in rows; they get sent to bed in order as they come.”

“By the time dinner is served,” said Chalmers, “have one of those men here. He will dine with me.”

“W-w-which—,” began Phillips, stammering for the first time during his service.

“Choose one at random,” said Chalmers. “You might see that he is reasonably sober—and a certain amount of cleanliness will not be held against him. That is all.”

It was an unusual thing for Carson Chalmers to play the Caliph. But on that night he felt the inefficacy of conventional antidotes to melancholy. Something wanton and egregious, something high-flavored and Arabian, he must have to lighten his mood.

On the half hour Phillips had finished his duties as slave of the lamp. The waiters from the restaurant below had whisked aloft the delectable dinner. The dining table, laid for two, glowed cheerily in the glow of the pink-shaded candles.

And now Phillips, as though he ushered a cardinal—or held in charge a burglar—wafted in the shivering guest who had been haled from the line of mendicant lodgers.[2]

It is a common thing to call such men wrecks; if the comparison be used here it is the specific one of a derelict come to grief through fire. Even yet some flickering combustion illuminated the drifting hulk. His face and hands had been recently washed—a rite insisted upon by Phillips as a memorial to the slaughtered conventions. In the candle-light he stood, a flaw in the decorous fittings of the apartment. His face was a sickly white, covered almost to the eyes with a stubble the shade of a red Irish setter’s coat. Phillips’s comb had failed to control the pale brown hair, long matted and conformed to the contour of a constantly worn hat. His eyes were full of a hopeless, tricky defiance like that seen in a cur’s that is cornered by his tormentors. His shabby coat was buttoned high, but a quarter inch of redeeming collar showed above it. His manner was singularly free from embarrassment when Chalmers rose from his chair across the round dining table.

“If you will oblige me,” said the host, “I will be glad to have your company at dinner.”

“My name is Plumer,” said the highway guest, in harsh and aggressive tones. “If you’re like me, you like to know the name of the party you’re dining with.”

“I was going on to say,” continued Chalmers somewhat hastily, “that mine is Chalmers. Will you sit opposite?”

Plumer, of the ruffled plumes, bent his knee for Phillips to slide the chair beneath him. He had an air of having sat at attended boards before. Phillips set out the anchovies and olives.

“Good!” barked Plumer; “going to be in courses, is it? All right, my jovial ruler of Bagdad. I’m your Scheherazade all the way to the toothpicks. You’re the first Caliph with a genuine Oriental flavor I’ve struck since frost. What luck! And I was forty-third in line. I finished counting, just as your welcome emissary arrived to bid me to the feast. I had about as much chance of getting a bed to-night as I have of being the next President. How will you have the sad story of my life, Mr. Al Raschid—a chapter with each course or the whole edition with the cigars and coffee?”

“The situation does not seem a novel one to you,” said Chalmers with a smile.

“By the chin whiskers of the prophet—no!” answered the guest. “New York’s as full of cheap Haroun al Raschids as Bagdad is of fleas. I’ve been held up for my story with a loaded meal pointed at my head twenty times. Catch anybody in New York giving you something for nothing![3] They spell curiosity and charity with the same set of building blocks. Lots of ’em will stake you to a dime and chop-suey; and a few of ’em will play Caliph to the tune of a top sirloin; but every one of ’em will stand over you till they screw your autobiography out of you with foot notes, appendix and unpublished fragments. Oh, I know what to do when I see victuals coming toward me in little old Bagdad-on-the-Subway. I strike the asphalt three times with my forehead and get ready to spiel yarns for my supper. I claim descent from the late Tommy Tucker, who was forced to hand out vocal harmony for his pre-digested wheaterina and spoopju.”

“I do not ask your story,” said Chalmers. “I tell you frankly that it was a sudden whim that prompted me to send for some stranger to dine with me. I assure you you will not suffer through any curiosity of mine.”

“Oh, fudge!” exclaimed the guest, enthusiastically tackling his soup; “I don’t mind it a bit. I’m a regular Oriental magazine with a red cover and the leaves cut when the Caliph walks abroad. In fact, we fellows in the bed line have a sort of union rate for things of this sort. Somebody’s always stopping and wanting to know what brought us down so low in the world. For a sandwich and a glass of beer I tell ’em that drink did it. For corned beef and cabbage and a cup of coffee I give ’em the hard-hearted-landlord—six-months-in-the-hospital-lost-job story. A sirloin steak and a quarter for a bed gets the Wall Street tragedy of the swept-away fortune and the gradual descent. This is the first spread of this kind I’ve stumbled against. I haven’t got a story to fit it. I’ll tell you what, Mr. Chalmers, I’m going to tell you the truth for this, if you’ll listen to it. It’ll be harder for you to believe than the made-up ones.”

An hour later the Arabian guest lay back with a sigh of satisfaction while Phillips brought the coffee and cigars and cleared the table.

“Did you ever hear of Sherrard Plumer?” he asked, with a strange smile.

“I remember the name,” said Chalmers. “He was a painter, I think, of a good deal of prominence a few years ago.”

“Five years,” said the guest. “Then I went down like a chunk of lead. I’m Sherrard Plumer! I sold the last portrait I painted for $2,000. After that I couldn’t have found a sitter for a gratis picture.”

“What was the trouble?” Chalmers could not resist asking.

“Funny thing,” answered Plumer, grimly. “Never quite understood it myself. For a while I swam like a cork. I broke into the swell crowd and got commissions right and left. The newspapers called me a fashionable painter. Then the funny things began to happen. Whenever I finished a picture people would come to see it, and whisper and look queerly at one another.

"I soon found out what the trouble was. I had a knack of bringing out in the face of a portrait the hidden character of the original.[4] I don't know how I did it—I painted what I saw—but I know it did me. Some of my sitters were fearfully enraged and refused their pictures. I painted the portrait of a very beautiful and popular society dame. When it was finished her husband looked at it with a peculiar expression on his face, and the next week he sued for divorce.

"I remember one case of a prominent banker who sat to me. While I had his portrait on exhibition in my studio an acquaintance of his came in to look at it. 'Bless me,' says he, 'does he really look like that?' I told him it was considered a faithful likeness. 'I never noticed that expression about his eyes before,' said he; 'I think I'll drop downtown and change my bank account.' He did drop down, but the bank account was gone and so was Mr. Banker.

"It wasn't long till they put me out of business. People don't want their secret meannesses shown up in a picture. They can smile and twist their own faces and deceive you, but the picture can't. I couldn't get an order for another picture, and I had to give up. I worked as a newspaper artist for a while, and then for a lithographer, but my work with them got me into the same trouble. If I drew from a photograph my drawing showed up characteristics and expressions that you couldn't find in the photo, but I guess they were in the original, all right. The customers raised lively rows, especially the women, and I never could hold a job long. So I began to rest my weary head upon the breast of Old Booze for comfort. And pretty soon I was in the free-bed line and doing oral fiction for hand-outs among the food bazaars. Does the truthful statement weary thee, O Caliph? I can turn on the Wall Street disaster stop if you prefer, but that requires a tear, and I'm afraid I can't hustle one up after that good dinner."

"No, no," said Chalmers, earnestly, "you interest me very much. Did all of your portraits reveal some unpleasant trait, or were there some that did not suffer from the ordeal of your peculiar brush?"

"Some? Yes," said Plumer. "Children generally, a good many women and a sufficient number of men. All people aren't bad, you know. When they were all right the pictures were all right. As I said, I don't explain it, but I'm telling you facts."

On Chalmers's writing-table lay the photograph that he had received that day in the foreign mail. Ten minutes later he had Plumer at work making a sketch from it in pastels. At the end of an hour the artist rose and stretched wearily.

"It's done," he yawned. "You'll excuse me for being so long. I got interested in the job. Lordy! but I'm tired. No bed last night, you know. Guess it'll have to be good night now, O Commander of the Faithful!"

Chalmers went as far as the door with him and slipped some bills into his hand.

"Oh! I'll take 'em," said Plumer. "All that's included in the fall. Thanks. And for the very good dinner. I shall sleep on feathers to-night and dream of Bagdad. I hope it won't turn out to be a dream in the morning.[5] Farewell, most excellent Caliph!"

Again Chalmers paced restlessly upon his rug. But his beat lay as far from the table whereon lay the pastel sketch as the room would permit. Twice, thrice, he tried to approach it, but failed. He could see the dun and gold and brown of the colors, but there was a wall about it built by his fears that kept him at a distance. He sat down and tried to calm himself. He sprang up and rang for Phillips.

"There is a young artist in this building," he said. "—a Mr. Reineman —do you know which is his apartment?"

"Top floor, front, sir," said Phillips.

"Go up and ask him to favor me with his presence here for a few minutes."

Reineman came at once. Chalmers introduced himself.

"Mr. Reineman," said he, "there is a little pastel sketch on yonder table. I would be glad if you will give me your opinion of it as to its artistic merits and as a picture."

The young artist advanced to the table and took up the sketch. Chalmers half turned away, leaning upon the back of a chair.

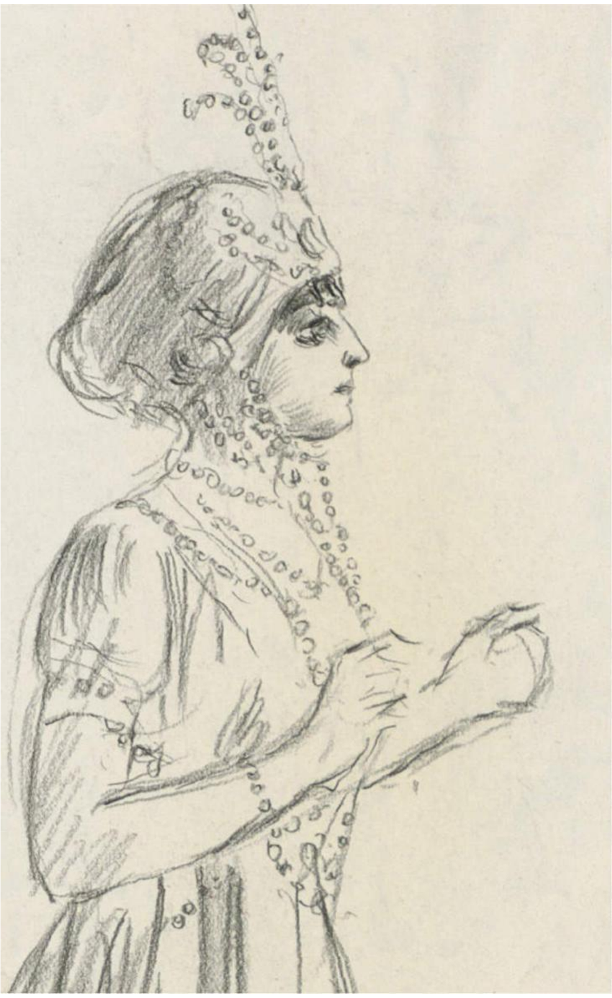
"How—do—you find it?" he asked, slowly.

"As a drawing," said the artist, "I can't praise it enough. It's the work of a master—bold and fine and true. It puzzles me a little; I haven't seen any pastel work near as good in years."

“The face, man—the subject—the original—what would you say of that?”

“The face,” said Reineman, “is the face of one of God’s own angels. May I ask who—”

“My wife!” shouted Chalmers, wheeling and pouncing upon the astonished artist, gripping his hand and pounding his back. “She is traveling in Europe. Take that sketch, boy, and paint the picture of your life from it and leave the price to me.”



Shahrazad. *Sketch by Paul Charles Delaroche from the Ballets Russes production of* Schéhérazade, *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, 1913.*

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1. *a well-oiled genie:* O. Henry integrates a series of references to the most popular elements of the *Arabian Nights*—magic carpets and obedient jinn—even as he develops narrative patterns

more closely associated with the Harun al-Rashid tales and the frame tale of Shahrazad and Shahriyar.

2. *the line of mendicant lodgers:* The author’s use of “mendicant” to describe the poor men who are hoping to find shelter on a cold winter’s night in New York City connects this story to the three dervishes in “The Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad.” Nineteenth-century translations of this tale frequently describe the dervishes as mendicants, and these “modern” men have been similarly reduced to a reliance on charity. Like the dervishes in the *Nights* tale, a poor man will be asked to tell his life story to satisfy the curiosity of his host (without the immediate threat of death to motivate him).

3. *“something for nothing!”:* O. Henry satirizes the hierarchical relationship of storyteller and host that appears in many of the Harun stories in the *Arabian Nights*. In this Bagdad-on-the-Subway, curiosity is also mixed with the potential for reward, but the New York al-Raschids are not likely to remedy injustices and offer fairy-tale endings in exchange for a story. A good meal is all that is on offer here.

4. *“the hidden character of the original”:* Plumer’s uncanny skills as an artist function as a form of divination—revealing hidden knowledge of his subject. This is another motif that links O. Henry’s story to the corpus of the *Nights*, where forms of divination abound and the evil magician in “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp” practices “the art of reading faces.”

5. *“turn out to be a dream in the morning”:* Plumer’s hope that this one night of comfort will not be revealed as a dream connects this story to the *Nights* tale of “The Sleeper and the Waker.” In that tale the protagonist is the son of a rich merchant who has squandered half of his inheritance and been abandoned by his friends. When the caliph meets him one night, he has him drugged and brought to his court. When the man wakes, he is greeted as caliph, but when he is drugged again and returned to his home, he cannot make anyone believe what has happened. The caliph’s trick will be revealed and the protagonist rewarded with a position at court. In O. Henry’s story, in contrast, the happy ending belongs to the caliph figure.

AFTERWORD

BY ROBERT IRWIN

THE EXTENDED FAMILY OF THE "ORPHAN STORIES" OF THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*[1]

IN 1981, THE great Arabist André Miquel published *Sept Contes des Mille et Une Nuits (ou il n'y a pas de contes innocents)*. "There are no innocent tales." Yes indeed, and the story of the orphan stories is peculiarly murky and highly contentious. Welcome to the embattled world of fairy-tale and folktale studies. Scholars at international conferences have come close to blows on the matter of what are known as the "orphan stories."

Now to business. Antoine Galland's translation of *Les mille et une nuits* was published in the years 1704 to 1717. Galland was a great scholar with what was, for the time, a good knowledge of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. But he was also a cavalier one. Scholarly standards in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were not what they are today, and one must be struck by the slapdash and even occasionally deceitful proceedings of such grand names as François Pétis de la Croix, Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, and Heinrich Fleischer. In the case of Galland, the aim of his translation was not to provide a perfectly accurate translation of a medieval text, but rather to present a collection of stories that would amuse as well as educate a largely aristocratic and mostly feminine audience. He was not entirely honest about what it was that he published as a translation of *Alf Layla wa-Layla*. For example, the story of "Sinbad" appeared in none of the pre-Galland manuscripts of the Arabic *Nights*. The story of "The Sleeper and the Waker" was translated from another Arabic manuscript.[2] Galland may also have drawn on a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Turkish version of the *Nights* that was in the Bibliothèque Royale (*ancien fonds* n. 356). He seems to have provided his own version of the ending of *The Thousand and One Nights*, in which Shahriyar's cruel heart is softened by the storytelling of Scheherazade (Shahrazad), so he elevates her to be his queen and forgives the sex to which she belongs. Furthermore, Galland added words and sentences, many of which were intended to serve as glosses on unfamiliar Oriental customs and objects.

Then there are the stories that do not feature in the manuscript from which Galland had been translating and for which (with one exception) no genuine Arabic manuscript version has been found. These stories, which have been labeled "orphan stories," are as follows: "Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp"; "The Caliph's Night Adventure"; "The Story of the Blind Man Baba Abdallah"; "The History of Sidi Numan"; "The History of Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal"; "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves"; "Ali Khawaja and the Merchant of Baghdad"; "The Ebony Horse" (this is the exception); "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu"; and "The Two Sisters Who Envied Their Cadette." Two of these, "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba," are among the most famous of the *Nights* stories, and two others, "The Ebony Horse" and "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," are, I think, fairly well known.

For a long time, scholars were puzzled by these stories, and it was widely suspected that Galland himself had made them up. For example, the Scottish poet and philosopher James Beattie questioned their authenticity in *On Fables and Romance* (1783): "[W]hether the tales be really Arabick, or invented by Mons. Galland, I have never been able to learn with certainty. If they be Oriental, they are translated with unwarrantable latitude; for the whole tenor of the style is in the French mode; and the Caliph of Bagdat, and the Emperor of China, are addressed in the same terms of ceremony which are used at the court of France.” John Payne, who published his translation in 1882–84, thought all the orphan stories were made up except “Aladdin.” He was misled in that last respect by the recent discovery of what appeared to be an Arabic manuscript of “Aladdin,” although this was later proved to be either a fake or a translation exercise from Galland’s French.

But then came the discovery made in the 1880s by Hermann Zotenberg, the Bibliothèque Nationale’s Arabist librarian, of Galland’s diaries and the revelation in them that the orphan stories had been told to him by a Maronite Arab from Aleppo who had been visiting Paris. Hanna Diyab’s stories, which were related in May and June 1709, were recorded in skeletal outline by Galland and then filled out for publication. The partial exception was “Aladdin,” for which Diyab provided Galland with a manuscript version, though this does not seem to have survived.

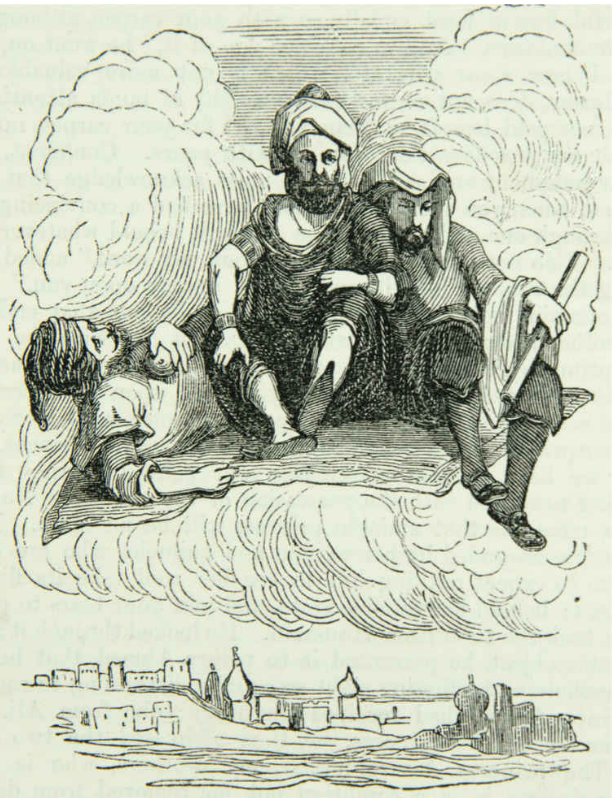
THE HYPOTHESIS OF FRENCH INVENTION

IN *STRANGER MAGIC,* Marina Warner has nevertheless adopted a skeptical attitude to at least some of the orphan tales. She thinks that “Aladdin” may have been composed by Galland, as were others of the orphan stories. She adds that, in the case of “Aladdin,” “Galland’s act of *hommage*, imitation and extrapolation drew from the genre of the *Nights* a structure that emphasized growing Western European interests: talismanic things; binding verbal formulae; and infinite potential for inverting social status in a world of mobile capital and phantasmagoric wealth creation.”[3]

She has had similar doubts about the Oriental authenticity of “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu”: “The internal evidence of ‘Prince Ahmad’ strongly supports an attribution to Galland or another French author of the time: In structure and in motifs, the tale matches closely fairy tales by Galland’s contemporaries, especially Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy.…”[4] Most specifically, she thinks the magic carpet may have been introduced into that story by Galland, who took inspiration perhaps from European folklore or from the growing European preoccupation with the possibility of flight. “If Galland pieced and patched together from other stories, then he was only doing what storytellers have always done, before and since. The magic device of the carpet can take its place beside other emblems of fairy tale fashioned by an author under a sudden inspiration, such as Cinderella’s slipper or the wicked queen’s speaking mirror.”[5] Though Warner’s case is strong, and I have in the past shared her doubts, it is nevertheless hard to believe that Galland faked the entries in his diaries regarding Diyab’s narrations—and there are other objections, as we shall see.

According to *Arab Folklore: A Handbook* by Dwight F. Reynolds (Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara), Galland, under pressure in 1709 from his publisher to produce more stories for his *Les mille et une nuits*, caved in “and began to add stories from a variety of sources (some of which have never been identified), including stories that he heard a visiting Syrian monk tell at dinner parties in Paris a few years earlier.” Galland then worked up those old notes. “Part of the popularity of these tales is due to the fact they were almost entirely (re)created by a European writer with a very good sense of what would appeal to a European audience. In these tales, for example, first appear the ‘magic lantern,’ the ‘flying carpet,’ and those immortal words ‘Open, sesame!’—all of which have become stereotypical images of Arab culture among Westerners, even though none of them are documented in Arab culture before their publication in Paris.” According to Reynolds, Galland maintained until his dying day that these tales were translations from an Arabic manuscript. “Thus the Nights doubled, tripled and quadrupled in size, with materials from a variety of sources.… The Middle East had become, as Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978) so clearly demonstrated, a landscape of Western fantasy, and the fantasy version of the Middle East was for many far more real than reality itself.…”[6] And in his chapter on the *Nights* in *The Cambridge History of*

Arabic Literature, Reynolds stated that the orphan stories constitute a third of the corpus of the *Nights*.[7]



The "flying carpet" from "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu." Illustration from Edward Forster's 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

Much of the above is misinformation—ideologically motivated nonsense in general and in detail (as we shall see). For the time being, it should be noted that, although Hanna Diyab was a Maronite Christian, he was no kind of priest. It is true that when young he did briefly enter a monastery in Syria, but he never completed his novitiate. His storytelling did not take the form of after-dinner yarning (which rather summons up the incongruous image of port and cigars circulating). I suspect that neither Galland nor Diyab was up to much as a dinner-party chatterer. Instead, Diyab told Galland stories one-to-one *après dinée* (after dinner), which, in eighteenth-century France, literally meant "after lunch" but was more broadly used to signify "afternoon." The dating is wrong, too. Diyab told the stories in 1709, and they were published later in volumes nine to twelve of the *Nights* (1712 and 1717), Galland having died in 1715. The orphan stories do not constitute a third of the corpus of the *Nights*, but, according to Aboubakr Chraïbi, an expert on the *Nights*—indeed, *the* expert on the *Nights*—they amount to a tenth of the material. The “magic lantern” properly belongs to the prehistory of cinema, not to the *Arabian Nights*. We will return to the magic lamp, the flying carpet, and “Open, sesame!” in what follows. It is odd, too, that a book devoted to Arab folklore made no reference to the sterling nineteenth-century research by the folklorists W. F. Kirby, W. A. Clouston, and H. C. Coote on the origins and analogues of the *Nights*, and particularly of the orphan stories within the *Nights*.

THE STORYTELLER FROM ALEPPO, HANNA DIYAB

TO GET BACK to facts, from May to June 1709, Hanna Diyab told stories to Galland and Galland jotted them down in greater or lesser detail in his diaries. Nowhere in the diaries does Galland designate the stories as belonging to the *Nights*; they are only referred to as *contes arabes* (Arab stories). The hurried notes he took from Diyab’s dictation furnished the basis for the longer published versions. Through close reading of those notes and the stories, Ruth Bottigheimer, a great expert on fairy tales, has convincingly established that Diyab told the stories in French, something that suggests Diyab’s strong familiarity with the French language and culture (and, I think, it may also suggest the possibility that Galland’s grasp of colloquial Arabic was quite weak).[8]

In *Les Traductions françaises des Mille et une Nuits* (1996), Sylvette Larzul drew attention to the ways in which Galland seemed to have Frenchified Diyab’s stories with a court ceremonial, formality of diction, palace and gardens that seemed redolent of Versailles, rather than suggesting anything very Oriental. Also, Galland had drawn on his earlier labors on the *Bibliothèque orientale* to flesh out the geographical details of the stories, and he was fond of certain items of Oriental bric-a-brac, such as sofas and dervishes. The first merchant to sell coffee in Paris had received his license in 1692, and Galland, who had published a treatise on coffee based on Arabic sources in 1699, included praise of coffeehouses in “Aladdin.” But then, as a Tuscan proverb quoted by Italo Calvino in his book on Italian folktales has it, “A tale is not beautiful if nothing is added to it.”

So the matter rested until the manuscript of Hanna Diyab’s autobiography was discovered by Jérôme Lentin in the Vatican Library in 1993. The diary has been translated as *D’Alep à Paris: Les Pérégrinations d’un jeune Syrien au temps de Louis XIV*, and Bernard Heyberger has provided a scholarly introduction to the translation (Paris, 2015). Diyab, who had a variegated and adventurous life, only briskly mentions his encounters with Galland. He recorded that he had meetings with an old gentleman whom he helped with some Arabic and he told him some stories. Nevertheless, the autobiography reveals other things. In the Middle East, Diyab had been closely associated with Paul Lucas, a man who had posed as a scholarly antiquarian but was at least in part an adventurer and treasure hunter. (Think Indiana Jones.) Like others in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who interested themselves in Middle Eastern antiquities, his main interest seems to have been in acquiring those antiquities and getting them back to Western Europe, where they could be sold. Lucas had a rich fund of stories, many of which concerned his own life and his encounters with thieves and pirates and even a quest for treasure in a warren of caves. Diyab later spent time in Italy and France. In France, he was presented to Louis XIV and was much impressed by the grandeur of Versailles and its gardens as well as the pomp of a grand Corpus Christi procession.

One of the broad points made in Paulo Horta’s thoroughly researched and subtly argued book *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights* (2017) is that previous accounts of the story of the translation of the *Nights* into Western languages have underestimated the contribution made by native informants. Diyab was one of those informants. Not only did he tell Galland stories, but, Horta argues, he endowed those stories with his own embellishments. The pomp, spectacle, and wealth of the French court, which had made such a great impression on him, fed into his narration of “Aladdin.” It may be that it was Diyab, not Galland, who provided Aladdin’s encounter with the sultan with all its stately French courtliness. Similarly, Diyab’s memories of Paul Lucas’s ventures into caves and encounters with thieves may have fed into his narration of “Ali Baba.” Ulrich Marzolph has gone so far as to declare that “it is this gifted Syrian storyteller to whom the tales in the final volumes of Galland’s *Thousand and One Nights* owe much of their charm, fascination, and enduring fame.”[9]

PRINCE AHMAD AND THE FAIRY PARI BANU

SO NOW for the stories, or at least some of them. “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu” is really two stories soldered together. The first story concerns the three sons of an Indian king who seek to marry a princess. Their father, the king, decrees that his sons should all go on quests, and whoever returns with the most marvelous object shall marry the princess. So they all go on shopping trips. Hussein goes to Bisnagar, where he buys a magic carpet, ‘Ali in Shiraz buys a hollow tube that allows its user to see things that are hundreds of miles away, and Ahmad in Samarkand buys an enchanted apple that cures every illness. The princes meet up on their way home. The magic tube reveals that the princess is mortally ill, the carpet whisks them to her bedside, and the magic apple cures her. Since they have all played a part in saving the princess’s life, the matter has to be decided by an archery contest in which the prince whose arrow travels farthest will marry the princess. ‘Ali’s arrow is found to have traveled the farthest, while Ahmad’s arrow cannot be found at all. So ‘Ali gets the bride.

Now for part two. When Ahmad goes looking for his arrow, he stumbles across the underground hideout of the Fairy Pari Banu. It was she who, greatly desiring Ahmad, used magic to make the arrow travel toward her, and it turns out that she had masterminded the provision of the magical objects. They marry and live in undisturbed bliss for a while. But then Ahmad takes to visiting his father. A wicked vizier alerts the king that Ahmad is living with a princess of the jinn. The king then takes to making outrageous demands of Ahmad, all of which Ahmad meets, until the king demands that Ahmad produce a little man with the strength of a giant. Pari Banu sends her dwarfish brother to the king, but, when her brother is treated rudely, this pocket Hercules thereupon takes up a great big pole with which he kills the king and the vizier. So all is well, and this leaves the throne clear for Ahmad with his fairy bride.[10]

If one compares the published version with the notes that were taken from Diyab's narration, then one sees that Galland tweaked the plot to make a more logical connection between the two halves of the story. He also inserted material he had already translated from ʻAbd al-Razzaq al-Samarqandi who had been sent on a mission to India by Shah Rukh in 1442.[11] Galland added the references to Samarkand and Bukhara, and it was he, not Diyab, who chose the Indian city of Bisnagar (more correctly, Vijayanagara, "City of Victory") as the place where the magic carpet was purchased. But is that all? Are there other elements in the story that are not authentically Arab and do not have Middle Eastern origins?

It has been alleged that there is a suspiciously large number of European fairy-tale motifs in the story of "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu." In her pioneering literary study of the stories of the *Nights,* Mia Gerhardt observed that "Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu" and "The Two Sisters Who Became Envious of Their Cadette" "are somewhat of a surprise within the book: they are as remote from the Arabic as they are akin to the European fairy-tale."[12] ("The Two Sisters Who Became Envious of Their Cadette" will be discussed below.) In *The Erotic World of Faery* (London, 1972), Maureen Duffy speculated that the "Prince Ahmad" story was an adaptation of the medieval fairy-bride story "Lanval," by Marie de France. (Lanval was one of King Arthur's knights.) But the fairy-bride story is not the monopoly of European fairy lore, and the first part of "Julnar of the Sea" is also essentially a fairy-bride story, and that is found both in the *Arabian Nights* and in *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*.[13]

The first part of the story of "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu" has a parallel in the *Tuti-Nama,* the fourteenth-century Persian story collection, for in "'The Story of the Daughter of a Respected Merchant, Her Three Suitors Who Rescued Her from an Evil Faery,' the first suitor uses his skill in divination to determine where the evil faery has taken the young woman, the second suitor uses his skill in constructing a flying horse and the third suitor, having mounted the horse, uses his unfailing bow and arrow to slay the faery, and so the woman is rescued, but then the suitors fall out over who should marry her.…"[14] The *Tuti-Nama* contains yet another somewhat similar tale, "The Story of the Devotee's Daughter, Her Three Suitors, Her Demise, Her Disinterment by Her Suitors and Her Revival."

Nevertheless, Marina Warner has expressed doubts about the Arab origins of this story:

> The internal evidence of "Prince Ahmad" strongly supports an attribution to Galland or another French author of the time: in structure and motifs, the tale matches closely [the] fairy tales by Galland's contemporaries, especially Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy; the stories she published a little earlier stage similarly protracted tests and outlandish romantic tests for lovers, as well as ingenious magical devices and aerial transport in, for example, "La Chatte blanche," "Serpentin vert," and "L'Oranger et l'abeille."[15]

Ruth Bottigheimer has recently argued in more detail that Diyab drew on d'Aulnoy's story of "La Chatte blanche" for some of the most important details of "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banou." It is true that "The White Cat" does feature three princes who are sent out on competitive quests and that the youngest son finds and marries a beautiful young woman with magical powers. Moreover, the king sets the youngest son a seemingly impossible task. Beyond that, the overall structure of the stories is different, and the resemblances must lie in the eye of the beholder.[16]

Is Prince ʻAli's acquisition of the far-seeing tube of ivory a fantastical version of the telescope? Perhaps. In which case, it would suggest a late date for the compilation of the story, since the telescope was invented in Europe around 1600. But the tube could merely be a variant on the magic mirror that features in a number of Eastern and Western stories, including

Chaucer's "The Squire's Tale." According to Richard Burton, the spyglass first appears in *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon, ca. 1270.[17]

The flying carpet has been described by several critics as a motif that is un-Arab, or un-Islamic, and as something that has hardly any parallel in the *Nights* or in medieval Arabic popular literature.[18] Marina Warner, having noted that "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu" is the only *Nights* tale to feature a flying carpet, suggests that it is an invention or importation by Galland.[19] It is true that this orphan story is the only *Nights* story to feature a flying carpet, but there is a flying sofa in the story of "'Ala al-Din Abu Shamat"; there is a flying throne in the story of "Jahanshah" in the "Buluqiyya" cycle of the *Nights*; and there is also the flying horse, which will be discussed below.

The flying carpet is indirectly alluded to in the Qur'an (Sura 21, verse 81, and Sura 34, verse 12), regarding the wind that ran for Solomon. The story of Solomon's carpet, which had a Talmudic origin, featured frequently in Arabic literature. It was green, embroidered in gold, and studded with precious stones. It was sixty miles long and sixty miles wide and large enough to carry Solomon's army.[20] Ibn Kathir's Qur'anic *Tafsir* ("Exegesis") is one of several texts to enlarge on this. Hasan al-Basri reported that Solomon once set out from Damascus in the morning, flew on to Istakhr in Persia (normally a month's journey for a swift rider), had lunch there, and flew on to Kabul (normally a month's journey), where he had dinner. Solomon's carpet features in "The Story of King Saba" in the early nineteenth-century Reinhardt manuscript of the *Nights*.[21]

The oldest surviving manuscript of the folk epic of the *Sirat of Baybars* dates from the sixteenth century, but its first version was probably compiled in the fourteenth century. Two of its episodes feature flying carpets. Flying thrones also appear in that *Sirat*, as well as in two other folk epics, *Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan* and *'Ali al-Zaybaq*. Flying jars appear in *Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan*.[22] In the Arab world, flying jars were commonly used by witches to get around. According to Arab lore, Khidr, the Green Man, was said to live on a green carpet in the middle of the sea. Ibn al-'Arabi, the thirteenth-century Sufi, saw Khidr perform his prayers on the magic carpet. A hagiography of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani described him as having once walked on the waters of the Tigris before an enormous prayer rug appeared in the sky above him. An Egyptian folktale features a *kahin* (soothsayer) who flew off on a carpet in a vain attempt to avoid being beaten by a flying slipper.[23] A flying chest featured in "The Weaver and the Trick He Played on the Carpenter" in the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Turkish "relief-after-grief" manuscript that was the source for Pétis de la Croix's *Les Mille et Un Jours*. The structure of that story clearly derived ultimately from the Indian *Panchatantra*, in which a weaver pretends to be Vishnu by having a carpenter construct a wooden flying replica of Garuda (the giant bird on which Vishnu flew).[24] So the idea that the stereotypical Oriental fabulist possessed such limited imaginative faculties that he was incapable of inventing and deploying a flying carpet should be dismissed out of hand.

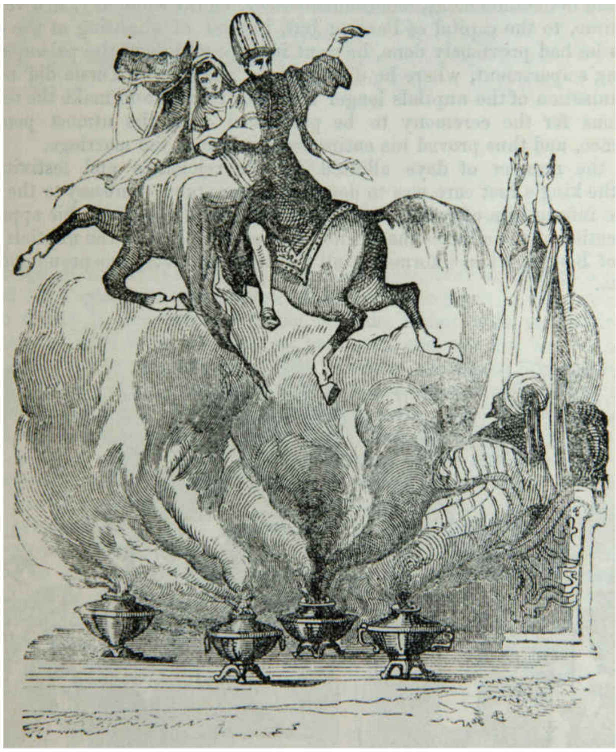
Should the flying carpet be regarded as a peculiarly European story prop? It is true that Burton noted a medieval legend concerning Duke Richard of Normandy (also known as Richard *sans peur*) and his nocturnal encounter with the spirits of Charles V of France and how those spirits allowed him to travel on a flying cloth to Mount Sinai.[25] Furthermore, flying carpets feature in several medieval Icelandic sagas, among them *The Saga of Sigrgraror the Valiant* and *Gibbon's Saga*. But otherwise, flying carpets hardly feature in European lore until after the publication of Galland's translation of the *Nights*.

In Firdawsi's epic poem, the *Shahnama*, Kai Ka'us, tempted by Iblis, determines to conquer the sky. This is done by constructing a throne with tall lances at its four corners. Chunks of meat are impaled on the points of the lances, and the specially reared and hungry eagles, which are tethered to the other ends of the lances, in their striving for the meat, propel the throne upward.[26] There is a similar story about Iskandar, or Alexander of the *Alexander Romance* in its various Eastern versions.[27]

The Indian story cycle *Vetalapancavimsati*, which is included in the eleventh-century *Katha Sarit Sagara* (*Ocean of Streams of Stories*), has the story of three suitors who compete for the same bride, and, after she dies, they find the means to restore her to life. This story also includes a flying carpet. Richard Burton freely adapted this as the sixth story in his *Vikram and the Vampire*. In the Persian adaptation of this story in the *Tuti-Nama*, the carpet has been replaced by a flying horse. The Indian and Persian stories are probably the distant ancestors of “Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu.”

Considering aeronautical matters more broadly, Marina Warner’s *Stranger Magic*, with reference to the flying carpet, provides a lengthy, erudite, and entertaining excursus on the prehistory of aviation in Western Europe—of legendary successes and genuine but lethal failures. Such stories can be seen as premonitions of the coming age of ballooning. The first hot-air balloon ascended in 1783.[28] But Islamic culture also has its prehistory of aviation. ’Abbas ibn Firnas (810–887) is probably the best-known of the pioneer aviators among the Arabs. This Andalusian polymath was based in Cordova. According to al-Maqqari’s *Nafh al-tibb*, Ibn Firnas constructed feathered wings that he attached to his back. Launching himself from a high building, he flew for a bit, but when he landed, he damaged his back, for birds land on their tails, and he neglected to make himself a tail.[29] One of Baghdad’s airports is named after him. Then there was Isma’il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari (d. ca. 1003), compiler of the dictionary *Taj al-lugha*, who, inspired by the example of Ibn Firnas, allegedly died after taking off from the roof of a mosque in Nishapur. (Understandably, there is no airport named after him.) The tenth-century Iranian litterateur Ibn al-Faqih gave an account of an architect who built a great tower for the Sasanian King Shapur I, who then decided to imprison him on the roof of the tower so that he could not build for anyone else. The architect, having successfully begged for wood in order to build a hut to protect himself from vultures, then used that wood to make wings and flew away.[30]

Sometime in the 1630s, the Ottoman aviator Hezârfen Ahmed Çelebi is reported to have successfully used artificial wings to fly, whereupon Sultan Murad IV decided that this man was too scary to be allowed to stay in Istanbul, so he sent him into exile in Algeria. It is also reported that in 1633, Lagâri Hasan Çelebi traveled in a gunpowder-propelled rocket and landed in the sea. A year earlier, his brother had made a glider flight. The topic of legendary aviation resurfaces when considering the story of “The Ebony Horse.”



The flying horse from Edward Forster's 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

THE EBONY HORSE

THE STORY of "The Ebony Horse" (or "The Enchanted Horse") was told by Diyab to Galland on May 13, 1709. Since it is also known from Arabic manuscripts postdating Galland, its status as a one of the "orphan stories" is sometimes doubted. The first part runs as follows: Three scholars come before the king of Persia and each displays a marvel. The Indian has a golden automaton with a trumpet. If an enemy enters the city, it blows its trumpet and the enemy drops dead. The Greek displays a basin of silver at the center of which is a peacock surrounded by twenty-four chicks. This elaborate clock (a clepsydra?) tells the time of day. The Persian sage has brought with him an ebony horse that flies. Like the two other marvelous objects, the horse in question appears to be an automaton, rather than a purely supernatural creature, since it is operated by a lever. This is the greatest of the marvels, and the Persian should be given the king's daughter as his award and bride, but she refuses him. The angry Persian then lets her brother, Prince Qamar al-Aqmar, mount the steed without telling him how it works. But once in the air, Qamar finds the lever that operates the steed and then successfully lands it on the roof of another palace, where he finds a beautiful princess. But, faced with the wrath of her father and his men, he has to take flight. Other adventures follow, ending with the rescue of the princess and Qamar's succession to his father's throne.[31] As was the case with the story of "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Pari Banu," the geographical details in "The Enchanted Horse" seem to have been inserted by Galland.

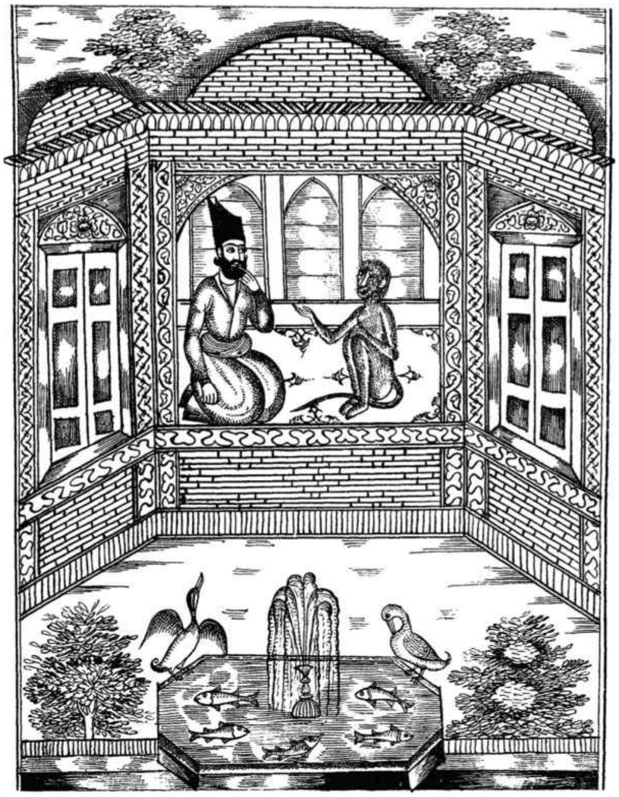
Though there are independent Egyptian manuscripts of this story, they are dated later than the publication of Galland's translation. Nevertheless, the story was listed in the contents of the lost second half of *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*, which was probably compiled in the fourteenth century. Jean-Claude Garcin, an authority on the history of Mamluk Egypt, has argued, on the basis of the appearance of certain textual clues and thematic resemblances found in what he has identified as the earliest printed version of the story (the Breslau edition of 1824–38), that a version of "The Ebony Horse" did feature in the fifteenth-century redaction of the *Nights* that he has attributed to a hypothetical "*Moraliste du XVe siècle*."[32] This moralist, whom he has tentatively gone on to identify as Ibn 'Arabshah (1392–1450), was a scholar best known for his vitriolic and ornately written account of the career of Tamerlane, the *'Aja'ib al maqdur fi nawa'ib Timur*. But the *Aja'ib* and other works that can be firmly ascribed to Ibn 'Arabshah are written in a very different style from that of the core stories of the *Nights*.

Be that as it may, Ruth Bottigheimer has pointed out that the story is very similar to the Italian story published by Straparola in the sixteenth century, *Bellisandra and Livoretto*. (On Straparola and his literary versions of folktales, see below.) Moreover, essentially the same story had appeared in the late-thirteenth-century romances *Cléomadès* by Adenet Le Roi and *Méliacin* by Girard d'Amiens, and Chaucer set about adapting the story in "The Squire's Tale," though he never finished the job. Garcin believes that both the *Nights* version and the European ones drew on a lost common source in Arabic. Incidentally, there is a bogus flying horse called Clavilleno in chapters 40 to 41 of *Don Quixote*. Doubtless, Cervantes was mocking one of the earlier medieval chivalric romances that had featured a flying horse.

There is no reason to doubt the antiquity of the fantasy of an Arab flying horse. There is a flying horse in the *Nights* story of "The Third Dervish."[33] Furthermore, the story of "The Ebony Horse" appears in manuscripts of *The Hundred and One Nights*, including one that has been attributed by Claudia Ott to thirteenth-century Andalusia, though that early date has been questioned.[34] Elsewhere, a mechanical brass horse features in the *Sirat of Baybars*. Mechanical horses of emerald and leather appear in *Sirat Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan*.[35]

ALADDIN

ACCORDING TO Galland's diary, in the single case of the story of "Aladdin," Diyab presented him with a manuscript of the story on May 5, 1709. Consequently, there is no synopsis of "Aladdin" in Galland's diary, and the Diyab manuscript has never been traced. There should be no need to summarize such a familiar story. It would seem to celebrate idleness undeservedly rewarded, and it develops into a kind of pornography of plutocratic excess. The story is set in China, but the Chinese setting is purely notional, as in all other respects the story takes place in an entirely Muslim environment. The frame story of the Hunchback cycle in the *Nights* was similarly set in China, and in the story of "Sayf al-Muluk," the hero visits the emperor of China. In such contexts, "China" just means a faraway land where strange things can happen.



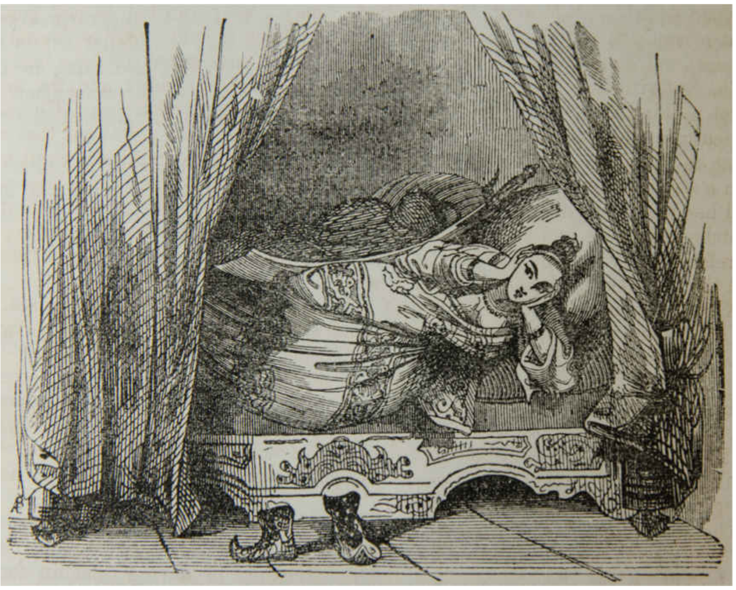
“The Tale of Abu Muhammad the Lazy.” The lazy protagonist of this Nights *tale receives a monkey as a result of a small investment in a trading expedition to China. The monkey turns out to be a jinni and makes him a rich man, although he also steals his bride. Illustration from the 1855 edition of the Persian translation of* One Thousand and One Nights, *illustrated by Mirzā 'Ali-Qoli Kho'i. Reproduced from the personal archive of Ulrich Marzolph, with permission.*

The theme of the youth who has not much about him and who indeed may have thoughtlessly squandered what he inherited, but nevertheless finds undeserved good fortune, is a common one in the *Nights*. In the story of “Abu Muhammad the Lazy,” the young man Abu Muhammad inherits nothing from his father, but his is nevertheless certainly a story of undeserved good fortune, which comes in the first place from a magic source.[36] “‘Ali the Cairene Merchant” is another example of this sort of story.[37] ‘Ali, having been profligate with the wealth he inherited from his merchant father, travels to Baghdad, where he rents a haunted house. On his first night there, instead of being killed by some evil spirit, he receives the shower of gold that had been reserved for the person bearing ‘Ali’s name, and a jinni brings further treasure. As a result of all this wealth, ‘Ali becomes the king’s vizier and his son marries the king’s daughter. Patrice Coussonnet made a close study of this story and, on the basis of the vocabulary used and certain historical references, dated it to the early fifteenth century.[38]

As noted, Marina Warner thinks that Galland invented “Aladdin.” She has also suggested that low-birth heroes are a particular feature of eighteenth-century European fiction. Moreover, Warner argues that Galland’s *Nights* was shaped by the particular concerns of Western Europe as it was increasingly driven by “capital wealth creation.”[39]

Bottigheimer, on the other hand, suggests that it was Diyab who drew on European sources for the plot and structure of “Aladdin”: “The concept that ‘Aladdin,’ the most iconic of all *Nights* tales, was foreign to the *Nights* tradition before Galland inserted it into his collection grates on expectations, but is broadly accepted among *Nights* scholars.”[40]

Bottigheimer has also argued that the use of magical objects, such as a lamp or a ring, to command something to be done is characteristically a feature of European fairy tales.[41] Also, with respect to the core stories of *Arabian Nights* and *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*: “In these stories pious Muslims turn to God for support and assistance against adversity, invoking his compassion, but they never knowingly manipulate the forces to which demons so clearly have access.”[42] A further argument, first presented in her account of European fairy tales, is that Giovanni Francesco Straparola (1485–1558), the writer who was the first to collect Italian folktales, invented the literary fairy tale in Europe and it was he who pioneered the rags-to-riches fairy tale. Earlier fairy tales tended to be “restoration” stories, in which a prince or princess, after various ordeals and adventures, regained their former status and wealth.[43] “Aladdin” would obviously be a rags-to-riches story. Also, the more specific rags-to-riches “Lazy Boy” motif is found in Straparola and in Giambattista Basile’s *Lo cunto di cunti* (1634–36). Similarly, it is suggested that the poor person who becomes rich through magic is found in Western lore but not in the *Nights*.[44] According to Bottigheimer, the motif of the poor boy marrying royalty (a common motif in the European tradition) does not exist in the Arab story tradition.[45]



Aladdin protects Budur's honor by placing a sword between them. Illustration from Edward Forster's 1854 edition of Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

There is indeed much in the story of "Aladdin" as we have it that suggests some creative input from Galland or Diyab. The motif of the sword between Aladdin and the princess does have European parallels. In the Arthurian romances, Pelleas placed a sword in the bed between Gawain and Arcade. Tristan and Isolde went to bed with a sword between them, and there was a sword placed between Sigurd and Brunhilde. Then the wedding ceremony of Aladdin looks very European, including his dancing with his new bride. Aladdin is a widow's son and so was Galland (though one could never have called Galland idle). The tacked-on moralizing conclusion of the story, in which Scheherazade lectures Shahriyar on how the African magician's wickedness brought him to an evil end, whereas Aladdin made good use of the treasures he had gained and, though of humble birth, he rose to royalty, smells of Galland. This kind of moralizing is rare in the authentic Arab tales of the *Nights*. There is also an unusual amount of dialogue and monologue in Aladdin, as well as unusual care in bringing out motivations. All these things indicate input from Galland or Diyab.

But, the folklorist Richard Dorson has noted, "The jinni who responded to Aladdin's wonderful lamp did not spring from a storyteller's or writer's imagination but from a belief system ingrained in the Egyptian culture and approved by the Koran."[46] Though the story of "Aladdin" has few or no parallels with the stories in the Paris *Nights* manuscript from which Galland translated, it has more Oriental features than the Europeanists have allowed. There are plenty of low-birth heroes and heroines and plenty of rags-to-riches stories in other *Nights* stories, including “The Fisherman and the Jinni,” “Maʿruf the Cobbler,” “The Man Who Became Rich Through a Dream,” and “Judar and His Brethren.” As noted above, the lazy-boy motif appears in the *Nights* story of “Abu Muhammad the Lazy.”[47] There is a more eloquent version of this story in *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*: “The Story of Abu Muhammad the Idle and the Marvels He Encountered with the Ape as well as the Marvels of the Seas and Islands.” Here we have a lazy boy to beat all lazy boys. He used to eat and drink lying on his side. When his mother brought him food, he found it an effort to move his jaws, and he was too lazy to move out of the sun into the shade. Yet he ended up incredibly wealthy. Arab storytellers liked to show their protagonists coming through and winning from a standing start. It also seems to be the case that Arab storytellers and their audiences believed that the acquisition of wealth improved a person, bringing as it did maturity, status, and responsibility.

It is true that in the *Nights* tale “Maʿruf the Cobbler,” Maʿruf is no longer a boy when the story starts, and he is not poor, but in other respects the parallels between “Aladdin” and the early part of “Maʿruf the Cobbler” are striking. After a comic prelude concerning Maʿruf and his nagging wife, he flees and finds himself in a strange city, where he bluffs his way into marrying the princess. Things look tricky when the vizier questions whether he is as rich as he pretends to be. But the princess helps him leave the city. Then, while he labors with a plow in a field, it dislodges an iron ring attached to an alabaster slab. He opens the slab and descends to an underground chamber. There he finds a ring that he rubs and a jinni, who is the slave of the ring, appears. Maʿruf then wishes for a merchant caravan of unparalleled wealth, and he returns with it to the city. All is well for a while, but then the wicked vizier, having learned about the power of the ring, uses it to transport Maʿruf and the king to a desolate place. But the princess tricks the vizier and uses the ring to bring back Maʿruf and her father. Thereafter, the story develops differently from “Aladdin,” and the nagging wife reappears.[48]

The story of “Judar and His Brothers” includes a magic saber, a magic clairvoyant sphere, and a magic vase. It also has a magician who can secure access to the hidden treasure only with Judar’s specific assistance. And later in the story, Judar acquires a magic ring that controls a jinni, and through this he conjures up a palace and marries a princess. Another story, “‘Ali al-Khawaja,” also known as “The Boy All of Whose Wishes Came True” in the Reinhardt manuscript of the *Nights*, is a variant of “Aladdin,” including the-irreplaceable-boy as well as the-palace-built-within-a-day-to-astound-the-king-and-win-the-hand-of-the-princess. ‘Ali and his bride are visited by a Maghrebi sorcerer who asks ‘Ali to accompany him and assist in the retrieval of some treasure. ‘Ali secures the treasure and kills the sorcerer. After various adventures, he returns to his wife and builds a palace. When the Maghrebi sorcerer’s brother comes along seeking vengeance, he too is killed.[49] The Reinhardt manuscript of the *Nights,* which is Egyptian and dates from 1831–32, is now in Strasbourg.

Admittedly, the Reinhardt manuscript containing “‘Ali al-Khawaja” is of a late date, and it might have been modeled on Galland’s version. Nevertheless, there is nothing especially European about protagonists’ use of magical objects to achieve particular goals. Such magical objects feature not only in “Maʿruf the Cobbler” and in “Judar,” but also in “Hasan of Basra,” “Ala al-Din Abu’l-Shamat,” “Abu Qir and Abu Sir,” “The Fisherman and the Jinn,” and other tales. In the folk epic the *Sirat of Baybars,* the sorcerer Kashwir abducts Miriam because only she is predestined to obtain the Ring of Hadhad, but when he tries to snatch it from her, it vanishes.[50] In the same epic, the wicked emir Jamr gets possession of a magic ring that allows him to hold power for seven years.[51] In the epic of *Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan*, a king drops his magic ring into a river, whereupon it is swallowed by a fish but then discovered by Sayf and used by him to behead his enemy.[52]

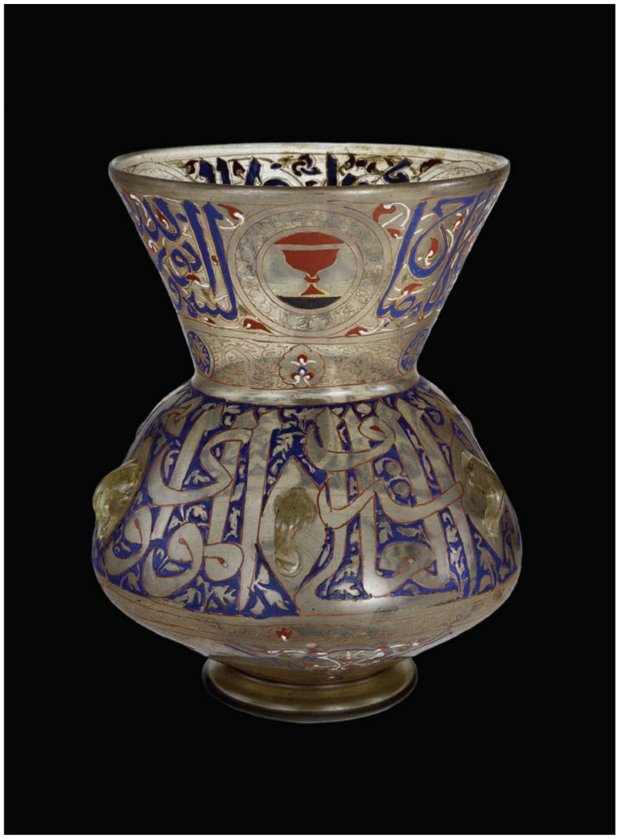
A sorcerer’s manual by al-Buni, dating from perhaps the thirteenth century, gives instructions for a magic ring that provides protection from all fevers. It also quenches hunger and thirst and causes orchards to flourish. But an elderly person should not wear it too often, as it diminishes sexual vigor.[53] The treasure-quest theme in “Aladdin” suggests an Egyptian origin, since Egypt was par excellence the land of treasure hunts and tomb robberies.[54] Lamps had been used for magical purposes in ancient Egypt: “Lamps were an image of magical protection.… Lamps consisting of a wick floating in a bronze bowl of oil were used for divination.”[55] *The Demotic Magical Papyrus* includes various divinatory spells involving the use of lamps or bowls and a boy as a necessary medium.[56]

In the *Kitab al-Khawass* (Book of Special Properties), a compendium on alchemy and magic attributed to the legendary eighth-century alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan but probably dating from the ninth or tenth century, there are spells for lamps to be used for magical purposes.[57] It must be borne in mind that, whereas almost all modern readers respond to magical elements in imaginative stories as pure fantasy, for a medieval Arab audience listening to or reading a story, magic was an undoubted element in the universe they inhabited, and indeed perhaps part of their own lived experience. It follows that, for the medieval reader, the distinction between a fantastic story and a realistic one was likely not to be as hard-edged as it would seem to a modern reader.

In the folk epic *Sirat Hamza*, a Maghrebi sorcerer lures a dervish to the legendary Mount Qaf to find treasure for him.[58] There is also a more primitive version of this story in the Edward Wortley Montagu manuscript of the *Nights*. This eight-volume manuscript, written in 1764, is now in the Bodleian Library.[59] There will be several more references to this manuscript in what follows. It was copied or compiled in Egypt, probably in Damietta, presumably on the commission of a European. It contains a number of tales that are not found in the more standard manuscript collections of *Nights* stories, and therefore it may be accounted to be part of the *Nights* apocrypha. Edward Wortley Montagu (1713–76) was an international criminal, louche dandy, and amateur Orientalist. He had studied Arabic at Leiden University with the famous Arabist Albert Schultens, and he later converted to Islam in Egypt. Among other things, he was noteworthy for his linguistic abilities, his enormous collection of snuff boxes, and his membership in the Divan Club (a club reserved for those who had traveled in the Ottoman Empire, and a precursor of Sir Francis Dashwood’s notorious Hellfire Club).[60] In the 1760s and ’70s, he spent time in the Egyptian Delta cities of Alexandria, Rosetta, and

Damietta. More specifically, he was in Rosetta for part of 1764. While in Egypt and Turkey, he accumulated a substantial library of Arabic and Turkish books and manuscripts. This he left to his son by an Egyptian concubine, Massoud (later known as Fortunatus). When Fortunatus died in 1787, this collection passed to John English Dolben, who later sold the collection via Leigh and Sotheby.

The manuscript that bears Wortley Montagu's name ended up in the Bodleian Library. Among so much else, it contains the story of "The Fisherman and His Son."[61] Abridging the preamble and extraneous details, the story, which has some similarities to "Aladdin," is as follows. The son, having thrown a fish that his father had caught back into the sea, purchases a cock from a Jew. When he slits it open, he finds a ring, and, when he rubs it, a jinni appears. The following day, the youth finds himself in the vicinity of the palace, and there he learns that the king has ordained that whoever succeeds in removing a mountain of ash may wed his beautiful daughter. The penalty for failure in this task is death. The youth gets the jinni to remove the ash and put a beautiful garden in its place. So he is married. Then the Jew comes wandering through the city, offering jewels for old rings. The princess gives him the ring, whereupon the Jew transports the palace to the Seven Islands. The fisherman's son then purchases a cat, a dog, and a mouse, and with their help regains the ring, but then they lose it in the sea, but then the fish who was spared at the beginning of the story delivers it to the youth. The jinni brings the palace back to its original location and the Jew is thrown into the fire.



Mosque lamp made in Egypt or Syria, about 1350. Glass lamps were made to light mosques and funerary complexes built by the Mamluk sultans and their amirs. They were suspended from the ceiling by chains. The Arabic inscriptions on this lamp suggest it was associated with the mosque of Sayf al-Din Shaykhu al-Nasiri at the foot of the citadel in Cairo. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Moreover, the Israeli scholar Joseph Sadan has discovered and translated from the Arabic a story that also bears a partial but significant resemblance to "Aladdin": "The Lover of Alexandria and the Magic Lamp." This story dates from Ottoman times and is preserved in a manuscript whose paper predates Galland's versions of the *Nights* stories by more than a century. In this story, when the tailor of Alexandria rubs and cleans the lamp, a terrifying jinni appears, and he reveals that he is the slave of the lamp and that the lamp contains his soul and therefore, in gratitude for the way the lamp has been treated, he will obey the tailor and grant him whatever he wishes. The lamp, by the way, is not the sort of thing one sees in nineteenth-century illustrations or in the Disney version of *Aladdin*. It is not a *siraj* or a *mishab*. It is a *qindil*. It is explicitly stated that it is of gilded glass, and it can be hung from a ceiling. So plainly we are looking at the kind of decorated glass lamp that was produced in profusion in the Mamluk period for the illumination of palaces and mosques. The tailor, who has previously glimpsed the daughter of Dankiz, the governor of Damascus, in a procession, asks the jinni to bring her to him, which the jinni does and then, on being so ordered, the jinni produces wine and food in abundance for the couple who soon become lovers. And thereafter the story goes on to diverge completely from the *Nights* story of Aladdin.[62]

In Simon Digby's *Tall Tales of the Afghans of India*, we find the story of "The Sultan's Magic Lamp Served by Jinnis." In this story, which is no later than the seventeenth century, a Mulla employs the two slaves of the lamp in order to enable him to gain access to the woman he desires. But then, fearful that the matter would not remain secret, he gave the lamp to the sultan.[63] Digby noted that a similar story was told about a lamp in the possession of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (ruled 1556–1605).

Clouston or Burton found the germ of the story of "Aladdin" in a Tamil story collection, *Dravidian Nights Entertainments* (*Madanakamarajankadai*), which probably dates from the seventeenth century. In the second story of the collection, the youth is assisted not by jinn but by animal helpers from whom he receives a magic ring that he uses to conjure up a palace, and he then marries a beautiful princess. An old hag in the service of a rival king tricks the princess into giving her the ring and uses it to transport the princess to the rival king. But another animal helper regains the ring and the princess for the youth.[64]

Early on in the version of "Aladdin" given by Galland, Aladdin ordered the jinni to dispose of a rival suitor for the princess's hand by transporting him to a privy and locking him inside.[65] The motif of the undesirable suitor being confined by a jinni in the privy is also found in "The Story of Nur al-Din 'Ali and Shams al-Din."[66] Though various other episodes and motifs found in "Aladdin" are scattered in "Judar and His Brethren," "Hasan of Basra," and "Maʿruf the Cobbler," it is unlikely that Galland stitched his story together by stealing episodes and motifs from those stories, since he never translated them and does not seem to have known them.

There are many similar stories in Middle Eastern and African storytelling. But in those tales, the Aladdin figure usually gains great wealth, a magical palace, and the hand of a princess through animal helpers, rather than by the assistance of a jinni, and then, when he loses all that to a wicked sorcerer or whomever, it is the animal helpers that assist him in regaining it all. William Alexander Clouston identified Hindustani, Mongol, Tamil, and other versions of this sort of story.[67]

In the nineteenth century, H. C. Coote reported that variant versions of “Aladdin” also seem to have circulated in Cyprus and Italy prior to Galland’s publication.[68] It is just possible that some of these relatively early versions could be oral reworkings of Straparola, rather than adaptations of an Arab or Turkish version of the story. But the Mongol and Tamil analogues would be extreme examples of an otherwise-unprecedented diffusion from the West to the East and from a literary source to a folktale. But Clouston was sure that the basic story line had an Asian origin, and he wrote about the tales that he had identified as precursors of “Aladdin”: “Most other versions, European as well as Asiatic, may be considered as belonging to the Thankful Beasts cycle of popular fictions—a circumstance which would seem to indicate that the tale is of Buddhist origin.”[69] Nineteenth-century folklorists, generalizing broadly, believed that animal-helper stories tended to have an Indian and ultimately a Buddhist origin. (I am not sure why.)

The seventeenth-century French traveler Jean Chardin reported that, when the Safavid Shah Sulaiman (1666–94) rode out with his eight-hundred-strong harem, much of the city of Isfahan was brought to a near-standstill twice a week, since all males were banned on penalty of death from the streets through which the shah was due to ride.[70] It is possible that this report of the clearing of the streets was borrowed from Chardin by Galland for his retelling of the story of “Aladdin.” But the taboo on looking at the princess as she rides out also appears in the *Nights* stories of “Qamar al-Zaman and the Jeweller’s Wife” and “The Warlock and the Young Cook of Baghdad.” This story motif also features in the fifteenth-century Turkish manuscript of *Relief after Hardship*.[71]

Aladdin’s *al-Din* name may suggest a relatively late date for the story’s compilation, since *al-Din* names only spread among the hoi polloi from the thirteenth century onward. Previously, this sort of *laqab* (honorific) was reserved for the elite, and especially its military members. “After 1200, compounds with *ad-Din* became part and parcel of the name, the person’s quality or rank notwithstanding. This custom, however, developed primarily in the Eastern part of the Islamic world.”[72] But *al-Din* names only became widespread in Egypt somewhat later, after the downfall of the Mamluk regime in 1517. In the western Islamic lands, the *al-Din laqab* was reserved for someone really grand, such as the fourteenth-century Andalusian vizier and polygraph Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib. The craze for geomancy started in thirteenth-century North Africa and Egypt. The references to *chavushes* (Ottoman officers) and coffeehouses suggest a dating to the Ottoman period, as does the anti-Semitism that briefly features in the story (since the early core stories of the *Nights* in their fifteenth-century redaction were free of anti-Semitism). But of course there is the possibility, even the likelihood, that all these clues to the dating may have been Galland’s or Diyab’s embellishments to the original tale.

Finally, on “Aladdin,” it may be that it is possible for a fairy tale to invade reality. ‘Ali Pasha of Janina (1740–1822), a long time Ottoman governor of Western Rumelia, liked to pose as a latter-day Aladdin, and he would sport his magic ring, which had raised him from rags to riches. When ‘Ali was an adolescent, a Moroccan dervish had come to his family’s home seeking charity. Though the family was poor, they fed and looked after him for a month. He rewarded them by presenting their son with a ring. “It would bring him extraordinary happiness and lead him rapidly to the highest degree of grandeur, riches and power.” And so it proved.[73]

ALI BABA

AGAIN, there is no need to summarize a story as famous as “Ali Baba.” Food was prominent in Diyab’s summary of the story and in the analogous oral and folkloric versions that Aboubakr Chraïbi has identified.[74] Galland omitted this in favor of emphasizing the gold and the jewels and, as we shall see, that may be significant. Even so, there is less of a French feel to this story. Diyab called the protagonist Hogia Baba (that is to say, *Khawaja* Baba). There is little chance that Galland made up this story. True, the Wikipedia entry on “Open, Sesame” states, regarding the story of “Ali Baba,” that “No earlier oral or written version of this story is known in any language,” but this is doubtful. Aboubakr Chraïbi has produced an extensive survey of the oral versions that have circulated in many languages and cultures. In one of the many oral versions that Chraïbi summarizes, the Syrian tale of “The Woodcutter and *Ifrits*,” the woodcutter finds the cave of the *ifrits* (demon animals) and does not touch the food but comes away with gold and jewels. Then his greedy brother finds his way to the cave and falls upon the food, so the *ifrits* eventually find and kill him. The emphasis on food and greed is also found in Kabyle and Yoruba versions. The significant point is that food features prominently in the oral versions, just as it did in Diyab’s narration, in which the cave is more of a dining room containing a set table than a treasury, though not in Galland’s retelling. Also in Diyab’s version, though not in Galland’s, the robbers, after killing Ali Baba’s brother Qasim, eat before leaving the cave.

Therefore, Chraïbi argues that the multifarious other versions of the tale (none of which, by the way, name the protagonist as Ali Baba) do not derive from some kind of Chinese-whispers narration circulating among largely illiterate cultures that have drawn at several removes on Galland’s invention, but rather they are part of a widely circulated folktale that Hanna Diyab passed on to Galland, who then turned it into literature. Nevertheless, Bottigheimer, who wishes to argue for a literary source for the story, insists that these folktales are late adaptations of such a source, and that peasants and laborers in their retelling of it would naturally stress the availability of food rather than dwelling on gold and diamonds. But, if “Ali Baba” did derive from a relatively late European literary source or sources, then this would be an unusual example of diffusion from literature to folk culture, and from West to East and South, and, moreover, one where the diffusion was extraordinarily widespread. The Arabist

Edward Palmer (1840–82) “heard a story nearly resembling ‘Ali Baba’ told amongst the Arabs of Sinai.”[75] Michel Gall made an unconvincing case for an Armenian origin of “Ali Baba.”[76]

On a lesser matter, it seems to be true that there is no direct antecedent for the phrase “Open, sesame” in pre-Galland Arabic literature or folklore. Then again, no pre-Galland antecedent can be found for this phrase in European literature or folklore. Nevertheless, the employment of “sesame” fits with the preoccupation with foodstuffs that is pervasive among the precursors and analogues of Ali Baba in Middle Eastern and African literature listed by Chraïbi. In Egypt and Turkey, breads and pastries are frequently flavored or sprinkled with sesame. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* sesame presses are regarded by the Arabs as the haunts of spirits.[77] By the way, the phrase would have been “*Iftah simsim!*” or “*Iftah juljulan!*” The English word *sesame* and the Arabic word *simsim* derive ultimately from the ancient Egyptian *semsemt*. Very likely, sesame oil was used in the Arab world to ease locks. The sesame plant was employed in Babylonian incantations to undo spells. An extremely sinister divinatory procedure involving sesame oil is described in the medieval Arabic sorcerer’s manual, *Ghayat al-hakim.* The industrious William Clouston pointed to a parallel of the “Open, sesame” motif in the Chinese legend of the Kwang-sio-foo cave in Kiang-si. One day, a poor herdsman overheard someone addressing the mountain with the following words: “Stone door open; Mr Kwai Ku is coming.” Thereupon, an opening appeared and he went in. A little later, he emerged and spoke again: “Stone door close; Mr Kwai Ku is going.” Kwai Ku was a kind of Chinese jinni. Eventually the herdsman uses the necessary words to enter the cave, where he finds great riches. Thereafter, the story diverges from the “Ali Baba” pattern, and the herdsman loses his grandmother to the vengeance of the cave.[78]

THE CALIPH’S NIGHT ADVENTURE

In "The Caliph's Night Adventure," Harun al-Rashid, as so often, cannot sleep and is bored. He and Jaafar venture out in disguise. First they encounter a beggar who asks to be slapped for every coin he receives. He is told to present himself at the palace the following morning. Then they see a young man whipping his horse. He is told the same thing. Finally, on the way back to the palace, they pass by a grand house. They are told that it belongs to Hasan al-Habbal. He used to be poor but now has become mysteriously rich. He must present himself to the palace as well. So "The Caliph's Night Adventure" is a frame story and we have three mysteries (in a manner that is reminiscent of the opening of so many Arthur Conan Doyle stories).

In the uncovering of the answer to the first mystery, the blind man Baba Abdallah, who was not born blind, relates how one day he encountered a dervish who guided him to treasure, but then Baba Abdallah's inordinate greed led him to demand not only all the treasure they had found but also a magic salve in the dervish's possession. The dervish even agreed to this, telling him that if he applied the salve on the left eyelid, it would reveal all the treasures of the world. But if he applied it to the right eyelid, he would go blind. But Abdallah, not trusting the dervish, tried it on both eyelids, whereupon he went blind. Thereafter, he asked to be slapped every time he receives alms as a sign of repentance.

SIDI NUMAN

Sidi Numan is also framed by "The Caliph's Night Adventure." Sidi Numan's wife, Amina, is a nasty piece of work. Since she eats very little at dinner, he gets suspicious, and one evening he shadows her to a cemetery, where she settles down to a meal of corpses that she shares with a ghoul. The following evening, when he tries to get her to eat a normal dinner, she refuses and turns him into a dog. As a dog, he is taken care of by a baker. Eventually a young woman recognizes his true nature and restores him to his human form. Then she gives him a potion that he uses to turn his wife into a mare, which he whips every day. “The Tale of Sidi Numan” somewhat resembles “The Tale of the Third Dervish,” as well as that of “The Enchanted Prince.” In both those stories, the husband discovers that he is being sexually betrayed, but when he reveals this, he then becomes the victim of his wife’s sorcery.

Cannibalism might be thought to be a distinctively European story motif. Ahmed K. Al-Rawi has argued that ghouls in medieval Arabic literature, though certainly nasty enough creatures, were not portrayed as dwelling in cemeteries and eating the corpses there, hence he believes that these features must be an embellishment of Galland’s.[79] But in *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), Edward William Lane had this to report: “The existence of ‘Ghouls’ likewise obtains almost universal credence among the modern Egyptians, in common with several other Eastern nations. These beings are generally believed to be a class of evil ginnees, and are said to appear in the forms of various animals, and in many monstrous shapes; to haunt burial-grounds, and other sequestered spots; to feed upon dead bodies; and to kill and devour every human creature who has the misfortune to fall in their way. Hence, the term ‘ghoul’ is applied, in general to any cannibal.”[80]

There is a general tendency for ghouls in Arab stories to be female and to prey upon solitary males. These ghouls are often giantesses with long pendant breasts and the feet of goats. But male ghouls are certainly also known. A male cannibal ghoul features in the *Nights* story “Sayf al-Muluk and Princess Badiat al-Jamal.” A female cannibal ghoul features in “The King’s Son and the Ogress,” and a female cannibal ghoul stars in “The Prince and the Ogress.” A cannibal ghoul presides over a sinister castle in “The History of Gharib and His brother ‘Ajib.” In “The Third Voyage of Sinbad,” Sinbad and his companions were being fattened up to be eaten by a cannibal giant. In “The Fourth Voyage of Sinbad,” Sinbad escapes from a tribe of cannibal Magians. Cannibals and cannibalism feature in *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange* and in the folk epics of *Baybars*, *Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan*, *Hamza al-Pahlawan*, *‘Antar*, and *Dhat al-Himma*. Moreover “Regular cannibalism,” “Ghouls,” “Person becomes cannibal,” “Occasional cannibalism,” and “Occasional cannibalism—deliberate” have been listed as Arab narrative motifs, G10, G20, G30, G50, G60, G70, and G80.[81] Cannibals and cannibalism were evidently stock features of medieval Arab popular fiction and folklore.[82]

Most conclusively, Galland took down what Diyab told him in his diary, as he was being told the story on the day. As recorded in the diary, the man followed his wife and "*elle sortit de la maison et alla au cemitière, avec l'aide d'une Goulah, elle decouvrit la terre d'une fosse, ou un mort avoit esté enterre le meme jour. Elle mangea de la chair du cadavre*."[83] It is difficult to envisage Galland at work embellishing the story while taking dictation from Diyab. Finally, what kind of story would this be if the husband follows the wife and finds that she has been nipping round to a nearby bakery and eating lots of bread, and that is why she has not been eating much at home? The ghoul and the diet of fresh corpses have to be an essential part of the story.

KHAWAJA HASAN AL-HABBAL

IN "THE HISTORY of Khawaja Hasan al-Habbal," the third story arising from the caliph's night adventures, Hasan tells Harun al-Rashid the story of how he has become so rich. This is a fable about the competing roles played by destiny and by hard work in life. There does not seem to be any very determined effort to claim European ancestry for this tale, even though there are comparable later versions in European folktales. In the story of "'Ali Khawaja and the Merchant of Baghdad," as with the story of "Hasan al-Habbal," there is a notable absence of magic. Instead, it is an early and simple story of detection. As with other orphan stories, the geographic details seem to have been added by Galland. There does not seem to be any indication that this might derive from a European source, nor have I noticed any claim that it might have a European ancestor.

THE TWO SISTERS JEALOUS OF THEIR CADETTE

“THE TWO SISTERS Jealous of Their Cadette” is a complex story, and what follows is its gist. Two older sisters envy the youngest sister’s marriage to the shah of Persia. (This is a story of one set of three siblings, a second set of three siblings, and three quests for three magical objects.) The first time the youngest one gives birth, her sisters steal the baby and substitute a puppy. Similarly, after the second birth, they substitute a kitten, and the third time a young muskrat. So it is bruited that the youngest sister has given birth to monsters. The babies, two boys and a girl, are taken away and given to the head gardener, who raises them as his own. Later, an old woman visits the siblings’ residence and tells the two brothers and the sister, who by now are fully grown, that their garden lacks three things: a talking bird, a singing tree, and the golden water. They are all to be found on the frontier of India. The oldest brother goes in quest of the talking bird, but it is protected by a spell. The hill resounds with loud voices, and anyone who turns around in fear is turned to stone, and this is what happens to the oldest brother. The same happens to the younger brother. Then the sister tries, and she has had the fore-thought to stuff her ears so as not to hear the voices. She secures the talking bird and the bird leads her to the singing tree and to the golden water. She sprinkles the golden water on her brothers to bring them back to life and movement. The three then return home and present themselves to the king. The talking bird tells the king all that has happened, and the two jealous sisters are executed. The story ends with the king recognizing his children and repenting his error. This was the last of the stories to appear in Galland’s publication of *Les mille et une nuits*, and it prepares the way for the closing page, in which Shahriyar, like the king in the above story, recognizes his error. After hearing this story, Shahriyar repents his earlier decision to invariably execute a virgin after he had slept with her. Scheherazade has saved herself and her sex.

The motif of two of the three siblings being turned to stone in attempts to reach the magic bird, leaving the third to succeed, is found in the story of “The Sultan and His Sons and the Enchanting Bird,” as it appears in the

Wortley Montagu manuscript of the *Nights*. The motif of the two sisters who are jealous of the third, and therefore substitute puppies for her babies, is found in “The History of Abu Niyya and Abu Niyyatayn,” which is also included in the Wortley Montagu manuscript.

There are numerous European parallels and variants. There is a very similar medieval Spanish story featuring substitute babies in the thirteenth-century *Libros de los gatos* by Odo of Cheriton. In his *Italian Folktales*, Italo Calvino included a Tuscan version of “The Fine Green Bird,” which he adapted from Vittorio Imbriani’s nineteenth-century collection of Florentine stories. He noted that, as a folk story, it was widespread throughout Europe and the Arab world, and that it was quite similar to the *Nights* tale of “The Two Sisters Who Became Jealous of Their Cadette,” and that the earliest literary version appeared as Straparola’s story “Ancilotto.”[84] Bottigheimer has similarly noted “perplexing similarities” between Straparola’s “Ancilotto” and this story.[85] In “Ancilotto,” the queen mother and the midwife are the villains. Three puppies are substituted for the babies, who are triplets. And the sequence of quests is first the dancing water, second the singing apple, and third the speaking bird. There are other differences. In the Straparola version, the queen’s children collect diamonds whenever they comb their hair. Also, it is the wicked sisters who urge two brothers and the sister to go on what the wicked aunts hope will be fatal quests. But certainly the resemblances in general structure and details are close enough. Either the one version derived from the other or they both derived ultimately from a common source. Could Diyab have heard this story in Italy? For what it is worth, Diyab used Persian names for the characters in his version of the story. Could Diyab have heard an Arab adaptation of a Persian story?

In *Folktales of Egypt*, Hasan El-Shamy gives a close variant of this story as “The Promises of the Three Sisters.” It was recorded in the Nile Delta in 1963.[86] He noted that it was extremely popular in Egypt and that it was normally narrated by females. It is also more widely known throughout North Africa and the Middle East among both Arabs and Berbers. Furthermore, numerous variants have been found in sub-Saharan Africa.[87] Also, as Coote pointed out, “The Two Jealous Sisters” is essentially the same as the Hindu story “The Boy Who Had the Moon on

His Forehead and the Star on His Chin."[88] In an appendix to Burton's translation of the *Nights*, Clouston provided synopses of various versions of roughly the same first part of the tale, dealing with the substitution of the babies, including examples from Europe (even one from Iceland), an oral version from nineteenth-century Egypt, an Algerian Kabyle version, a Bengali version, and a Sanskrit Buddhist version (the last of which Clouston believed might be the most primitive version of the story). Clouston, and Coote before him, doubted that Galland would have stooped to borrow the elements of this tale from Straparola's well-known version, or a later recension by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, and preferred to believe that Galland's redaction was based on a lost Arabic source.[89] Although most scholars who have studied the tale in recent years have favored a European origin for "The Two Sisters Who Envied Their Cadette," the tale is so widely distributed around the world that there must be room for doubt.

According to Bottigheimer, monstrous births tend to be a European motif. But quite a range of monstrous births feature in Arab stories, and they have been listed by El-Shamy as the Arab narrative motif T 550.[90] As for the sprinkling of water in spells of disenchantment, this appears in the postscript to "The Story of the Lady of the House," one of the core stories in the *Nights*, and that story also contains the motif of the jealous sisters.[91] The sprinkling with water in a spell of disenchantment also features in the *Nights* story of "Julnar of the Sea and Her Son, Badr Basim."[92]

CONCLUSION

IT WOULD SEEM from some of the arguments I have been discussing above that it is not enough for the West to have invented X-rays, the helicopter, and chat shows. The West, according to some, must also be credited with the invention of magic passwords, flying horses, magic lamps, and cannibalism.

So do the orphan stories really have a Western origin? More specifically, can some of the orphan tales be proved *not* to be orphans at all, since their father, or mother, was Straparola or d'Aulnoy? According to Bottigheimer, Straparola invented the "rise-from-humble-origins" fairy-tale type. Such tales "reflected the rise of the bourgeois in Venice and more widely throughout Italy and Western Europe." Could Diyab have heard Straparola's stories in Aleppo or Italy? Italian was the dominant component of the lingua franca of the Levant until the eighteenth century, when it was slowly replaced by French. But it seems unlikely that Diyab heard some of Straparola's tales in Italy, as Diyab does not seem to have been fluent in Italian.

Incidentally, in considering the possibility that Arabic versions of "Aladdin" and other stories derived ultimately from European literature, one might question that if Straparola's tales were allegedly tailored to meet the taste of literate and upwardly mobile members of the Italian bourgeoisie and aspirants to that status, then what could be the appeal of those tales to Arabs, whose social environment differed quite markedly from that of their Venetian and Parisian contemporaries?

It has been noted by Bottigheimer and others that there is more magic in the orphan stories than in the core stories of the *Nights*. Perhaps, but this may reflect Galland's taste and consequent choices (for he did not choose to publish all the stories Diyab told him). Alternatively, and more likely, the prevalence of magic in the stories told by Diyab may reflect his enthusiasm for this sort of thing. Moreover, Bottigheimer, in her book on Straparola, observes that his heroes and heroines in the "rise-from-humble-origins" tales experience magic passively. They do not use it to make things happen.[93] Whereas Aladdin, who is certainly the subject of a "rise" tale, does make active use of his possession of the lamp.

On the other side of the argument, nineteenth-century diffusionists such as the Sanskrit scholar Benfey and the folklorists Cosquin, Clouston, Coote, and William Kirby liked to track the stories eastward—back to what was presumed to be their birthplace, India. But diffusionism is now out of fashion, so much so that it is hard to find any modern folklorists even bothering to spend time refuting it.[94] Italo Calvino obviously did not care for this sort of thing, and in his edition of *Italian Folktales*, he wrote:

“The followers of the Finnish school, in setting up a method for tracing migrations amongst Buddhist countries, Ireland, and the Sahara, applied a system similar to that used for the classification of coleoptera, which, in their cataloguing process, reduced findings to algebraic sigla of the Type-Index and Motif-Index.”[95]

As noted above, according to Clouston, helpful beasts in a story always suggested a Buddhist prototype. Personally, I do not think that one has to be a Buddhist to dream up the idea of animal helpers in a fairy story, but Clouston got this notion from the great scholar of Sanskrit, Theodor Benfey (1809–1881), who was convinced of the ultimate Indian and Buddhist origins of almost all stories and their subsequent migration to the West. Benfey also believed that stories found in literature often served as the sources for oral folktales, though he looked for those sources in Sanskrit literature. But even though there is certainly evidence for the westward migration of stories from Indian sources such as the *Panchatantra*, one wonders whether migrating stories always have to follow the sun.

On the other hand, it is a little unlikely that illiterate peasants in remote areas of the world became acquainted with the stories of Straparola, Madame d’Aulnoy, and Galland at several removes through verbal intermediaries and they then recycled them in what became oral folktales in which the European fairies might become Oriental jinn. In the 1920s, Constance Padwick did a careful study of the beliefs of the fellahin of Lower Egypt regarding the jinn and ghouls. Here are some of her conclusions, as published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*. First, with respect to information about jinn and ghouls in the *Nights* and other literary sources: “It is possible to find many points of likeness between this information and the jinn-beliefs current in the Nile Delta. But it is another matter to prove that the peasant borrowed jinn-ideas from the ‘Nights’ and on investigation this seems less and less likely.” She went on to point out that the *Nights* tales are overwhelmingly urban, and that they do not deal with the world of peasants and their concerns. Moreover, while she could find plenty of lower-class informants in Cairo—hotel servants and the like—who could tell her more or less garbled versions of *Nights* stories, she could not find any peasant who knew a single one of those stories. And, while the jinn in the *Nights* often have individual names, such as Dahnash or Maymuna, and they have more or less rational motivations for what they do, the jinn and ghouls that haunt the world of the peasant do not. They are like wild beasts, albeit ones with supernatural and shape-shifting powers.[96] If Egyptian country folk were so ignorant of the Arab stories of the *Nights*, they were hardly likely to be more knowledgeable about literary fairy tales stemming from Europe. As for authentic tales that either derived from the *Nights* or were added to it over successive centuries, insofar as they circulated orally, they would seem to have done so mostly among town and city dwellers. (And, of course, the urban nature of most of the *Nights* stories has long been noted.)

I am not going to try to revive the case for diffusionism, since, though tempted, I lack the range and depth of knowledge to do so. I have been content, instead, to use the data assembled by folklorists of the old diffusionist school, as well as by scholars who have come later, to seek to demonstrate that the orphan stories mostly have earlier prototypes in Eastern and African literature and folklore. In a recent and important study of relief-after-grief stories by Ulrich Marzolph (the scholar who, together with Aboubakr Chraïbi, is the *éminence grise* of *Nights* studies), Marzolph has stated that “the present study argues that the European tale of magic owes still more and probably much more to Middle Eastern tradition than is currently acknowledged.”[97] He has also criticized Bottigheimer’s forays into medieval Arab storytelling as being too narrowly based on three Arab story collections: *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Hundred and One Nights*, and *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*. He points out that she has taken no account of Persian and Ottoman Turkish tales, even though there are Persian prototypes for many stories in the *Nights*. It is also likely that many Oriental stories entered the European repertoire after having been orally transmitted in the Ottoman Balkan provinces—and this has received little attention so far.[98] Rather than the orphan stories deriving from Straparola’s invented fictions, we might see his fictions as reworking and elaborating on items of oral storytelling that had entered Europe from the East or South. Though the Eastern parents of the orphan stories have not (yet) been found, their uncles, second cousins once removed, great-great-great grandparents, and other relatives come thronging forward to be recognized.

As Bartolomeo Rossetti wrote in the introduction to his edition of Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* (1966), his stories "… drew fully from the Oriental fairy tales, and we could also say, directly from the commercial and cultural exchanges with the Orient that had been conducted for centuries with the Italian coastal republics, above all with Venice. The continual flow of fairy-tale elements characteristic of the Orient and Arabic culture in particular fortuitously enriched the body of Italian story writing in this way."[99] So the shape-shifting ghosts of old stories have been reincarnated in new forms. Story motifs circulate in an endless play of variations, in the same way that myths do.

Two more quotations to bring this inquiry to an end. The first is from the polymathic Italian intellectual Roberto Calasso: "The repetition of a mythical event, with its play of variations, tells us that something remote is beckoning to us. There is no such thing as the isolated mythical event, just as there is no such thing as the isolated word. Myth, like language, gives all of itself in each of its fragments. When a myth brings into play repetition and variants, the skeleton of the system emerges for a while, the latent order, covered in seaweed."[100] The second is from a novel by Terry Pratchett: "Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have grown fat on the retelling.… Stories don't care who takes part in them. All that matters is that the story gets told, that the story repeats. Or, if you prefer to think of it like this: stories are a parasitical life form, warping lives only in the service of the story itself."[101]

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[1] The author thanks Ulrich Marzolph for correcting the proofs of the present contribution and updating the cited literature.

[2] A complete survey of Galland's sources is now given by Ibrahim Akel, "Quelques remarques sur la bibliothèque d'Antoine Galland et l'arrivé des Mille et une nuits en Occident," in *Antoine Galland et l'Orient des savants*, ed. Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat and Michel Zink (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2017), pp. 197–215. Galland's source for this tale has been studied

by Ulrich Marzolph, “The Arabic Source Text for Galland’s Dormeur eveillé,” *Oriente Moderno* 98 (2018): 1−32.

3 Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London, 2011), pp. 360–61.

4 Warner, *Stranger Magic*, p. 76.

5 Warner, *Stranger Magic*, p. 77.

6 Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Arab Folklore: A Handbook* (Westport, CT, 2007), p. 79.

7 Reynolds, “*A Thousand and One Nights*: A History of the Text and Its Reception,” in Roger Allen and D. S. Richards, eds., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 278.

8 Ruth B. Bottigheimer, “East Meets West: Hannā Diyāb and *The Thousand and One Nights*,” in *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 28 (2014): 304–5. Ruth Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s Mille et Une Nuit(s): I. New Perspectives on Their Recording; II. New Conclusions about Western Sources within Nights Texts,” in *Antoine Galland (1646−1715) et son journal: Actes du colloque international organisé à l’université de Liège à l’occasion du tricentenaire de sa mort*, edited by Frédéric Bauden and Richard Waller (Louvain, 2020), pp. 51−72.

9 Ulrich Marzolph, “The Man Who Made the *Nights* Immortal: The Tales of the Syrian Maronite Storyteller Hannā Diyāb,” *Marvels & Tales* 32, no. 1 (2018): 126.

10 On this story and all the other orphan stories that will be discussed here, see the entries devoted to those stories in volume 1 of Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, eds., *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, as well as the article “Orphan Stories” in volume 2, and Marzolph’s article “The Man Who Made the *Nights* Immortal,” pp. 114–29. In the latter article, Marzolph notes, with respect to the ruler making impossible demands of the hero and the hero’s ultimate triumph through magical means, that “similar tales are known.”

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12 Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Storytelling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, (Leiden, 1963), p. 300.

13 *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*, trans. Malcolm Lyons, 3 vols. (London, 2008), vol. 3, pp. 52–91; *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*, trans. Malcolm Lyons (London, 2014), pp. 113–34; *Das Buch der wundersamen Geschichten: Erzählungen aus der Welt von 1001 Nacht*, ed. Ulrich Marzolph (Munich, 1999), pp. 163–92, 644–45.

14 Ziya ‘u’d-din Nakhshabi, *The Cleveland Museum of Art’s Tuti-Nama/Tales of a Parrot*, trans. Muhammed A. Simsar (Graz, Austria, 1978), pp. 215–17, 135–39.

15 Warner, *Stranger Magic*, p. 76.

16 Bottigheimer, “Flying Carpets in the Arabian Nights Disney, Dîyab … and d’Aulnoy?” *Gramarye* 13 (summer 2018): 18–34.

17 *Supplemental Arabian Nights to the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 6 vols., trans. Richard F. Burton, vol. 3 (n.p., 1886–88), pp. 432–33n.

18 Reynolds, “*The Thousand and One Nights*,” p. 278; and, see especially, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, “Flying Carpets,” pp. 18, 32n.

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24 Ulrich Marzolph, *Relief after Hardship: The Ottoman Turkish Model for the Thousand and One Days* (Detroit, 2017), pp. 71–73.

25 Burton, *Supplemental Nights*, vol. 3, p. 425n.

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27 Graham Anderson, “The Alexander Romance and the Pattern of the Hero-Legend,” in *The Alexander Romance*, pp. 85–86.

28 Warner, *Stranger Magic*, pp. 335–54. See also Berthold Laufer, *The Prehistory of Aviation* (Chicago, 1928).

29 E. Lévi-Provençal, “’Abbas ibn Firnas,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 11; Clive Hart, *The Dream of Flight: Aeronautics from Classical Times to the Renaissance* (London, 1972), p. 90.

30 Hart, *The Dream of Flight*, p. 90.

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34 Claudia Ott, trans. *Tausendundeinenacht* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011). On this manuscript of *The Hundred and One Nights* and its contentious dating, see Ulrich Marzolph and Aboubakr Chraïbi, "*The Hundred and One Nights*: A Recently Discovered Old Manuscript," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 162 (2012): 299–316.

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40 Bottigheimer "Flying Carpets," p. 23.

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90 El-Shamy, *Folk Traditions*, vol. 1, p. 364.

91 *Arabian Nights*, Lyons trans., vol. 1, pp. 121–22.

92 *Arabian Nights*, Lyons trans., vol. 3, p. 78.

93 Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather*, p. 40.

94 Ulrich Marzolph’s recent book *101 Middle Eastern Tales and Their Impact on Western Oral Tradition* (Detroit, 2020) convincingly demonstrates the usefulness of comparative folk-narrative studies while discussing some of the tales originally narrated by Hanna Diyab.

95 Calvino, *Italian Folktales*, p. xvii.

96 Constance E. Padwick, “Notes on the Jinn and the Ghoul in the Peasant Mind of Lower Egypt,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (University of London) 3, no. 3 (1924): 421–46.

97 Marzolph, *Relief after Hardship*, pp. 42–43.

98 But see Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, p. 66.

99 Bartolomeo Rossetti, “Introduction,” quoted in Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), p. 14.

100 Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, trans. Tim Parks (London, 1993), p. 136.

101 Terry Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* (London, 1991), p. 2.

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—Paulo Lemos Horta

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—Yasmine Seale

RECOMMENDED READING, VIEWING, LISTENING, AND PLAYING

MORE TALES FROM THE *1001 NIGHTS*: “Qamar al-Zaman and the Princess Budur,” “Julnar of the Sea,” “Ali Shar and Zumurrud,” “Nur al-din Ibn-Bakkar and the Slave-Girl Shams al-Nahar,” “The Story of the Slave-Girl Anis al-Jalis and Nur al-Din Ali ibn-qan,” “The Hunchback,” “The Sleeper and the Waker,” “The False Caliph,” “The Wiles of Women,” “Marʿuf the Cobbler,” “Hasan of Basra,” “The Queen of the Serpents,” “The Adventures of Mercury ‘Ali of Cairo,” “The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again through a Dream,” “The City of Brass.”

ON THE *NIGHTS* (FOR A GENERAL AUDIENCE): Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*; Paulo Lemos Horta, *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights*; Marina Warner, *Charmed States and the Arabian Nights*. Scholarship by, among others, Aboubakr Chraïbi and Ulrich Marzolph. Related story collections: Bruce Fudge, translator, *A Hundred and One Nights*; Malcolm Lyons, translator, *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange: A Medieval Arab Fantasy Collection*. Related reading from the series The Library of Arabic Literature: Hanna

Diyab, Elias Muhanna, translator, *The Book of Travels*. Readers are strongly encouraged to explore the collection.

A FEW MORE FAVORITE *NIGHTS*-INSPIRED AUTHORS: Hanan al-Shaykh, César Aira, Paul Auster (*The Invention of Solitude*), John Barth, Jorge Luis Borges, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, A. S. Byatt, Angela Carter, George Eliot (*Daniel Deronda*), Neil Gaiman (“Ramadan”), Gabriel García Márquez, Güneli Gün, Robert Irwin (*The Arabian Nightmare*), James Joyce, Gyula Krúdy, Naguib Mahfouz, Orhan Pamuk (*The Black Book*), Nélida Piñon, Jan Potocki, Marcel Proust, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Joseph Roth, Salman Rushdie, Amina Shah, Mark Twain.

VIEWING (BEYOND DISNEY): George Méliès, *The Palace of the Arabian Nights* (1905); Ernst Lubitsch, *Sumurun* (1920); Fritz Lang, *Destiny* (1921); Raoul Walsh, *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924); Lotte Reiniger, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926); Alexander Korda, producer, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940); Jean Mauran, *Marouf, the Cairo Cobbler*, (1947); Ray Harryhausen, special effects supervisor, *Sinbad* trilogy (*The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, 1958; *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, 1973; *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, 1977); Karel Zeman, *The Adventure of Sinbad the Sailor* (1974); Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il fiore delle Mille e una notte* (1974); Richard Williams, animator, *The Thief and the Cobbler* (n.d.); Tim Johnson and Patrick Gilmore, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* (2013); Miguel Gomes, *Arabian Nights* (2015).

LISTENING: Luigi Cherubini, *Ali Baba* (1833); Charles Lecocq, *Ali Baba* (1887); Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *Schéhérazade* (1888); Maurice Ravel, *Shéhérazade* (1898); Carl Maria von Weber, *Abu Hassan* (1911); Kurt Atterberg, *Aladdin* (1941); Jan Hanus, *Tale of a Night* (1968); François Orene’s *A Thousand and One Nights* (1978); Taner Akyol, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (2012).

PLAYING: Games: *Magic: The Gathering* (collectible card game), 1993; *Aladdin's Dragons* (worker placement game), 2000; *Tales of the Arabian Nights* (storytelling game), 2009; *Ali Baba*, 2017; *Five Tribes: The Djinns of Naqala* (worker placement) 2014. Videogames: *Prince of Persia*, 1989–2021; *The Magic of Scheherazade*, 1989; *Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire*, 1990; *Sonic and the Secret Rings*, 2007.

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